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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Karnataka govt mulls 1 paisa per litre water tariff hike

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Deputy Chief Manager DK Shivakumar on Friday announced in the legislative council that the water tariff would be raised by 1 paisa per litre. He clarified that although the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) had proposed a hike of 7-8 paise, only a 1 paisa increase would be implemented for the time being.

Shivakumar explained that the water tariff had remained unchanged since 2014, and rising electricity costs for the BWSSB made this adjustment necessary. The tariff increase aims to help mitigate the board's annual loss of approximately Rs 1,000 crore. He also pointed out that many builders have illegally obtained water connections, stating, "Builders have constructed large apartment complexes without paying deposits to the BWSSB and have taken water connections unlawfully. We have already issued notices to these builders." The Deputy Chief Minister's statement came in response to Congress MLC Ramoji Gowda's call for expedited supplies of Cauvery water to households as summer approaches. "Last year was particularly challenging, with about 7,000 borewells drying up, prompting the government to take over private water tankers. We have implemented the Cauvery 5th stage, which now provides water to 110 villages," Shivakumar noted.

PHOTO: X

He further announced that 22 March would be recognised as Water Conservation Day, kicking off a month-long campaign aimed at promoting awareness about water conservation. "Public involvement is vital for the success of our efforts in water conservation," he added.—*Salar News*

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Residents question Cauvery water mandate

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Bengaluru residents living in apartment complexes are questioning the government move to make Cauvery water connections mandatory at their buildings.

In January 2025, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar directed the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to ensure that all apartment buildings within BBMP limits have Cauvery water connections.

This directive followed an Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and BWSSB study that warned of severe water shortage in 80 wards of the city due to groundwater depletion. However, experts question the transparency of the project's pricing.

—Salar News

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Karnataka bus stoned in Maharashtra

BELAGAVI, 14 MARCH

A Karnataka state government bus was pelted with stones in Ichalkaranji town, Maharashtra, on Friday evening. While no passengers were injured, the vehicle's window shields were damaged. Belagavi Superintendent of Police Bhimashankar Guled told reporters that six Maharashtra state government buses were also targeted in the incident. He clarified that the attack was not related to any border or language dispute between the two states. "The incident was carried out by a few miscreants who were reportedly intoxicated during Holi celebrations. We urge people not to overreact," he said.

—Salar News

Mark Carney is now Canada's new PM

TORONTO, 14 MARCH

A Former central banker Mark Carney was sworn in as Canada's new Prime Minister on Friday, and will now try to steer his country through a trade war brought by US President Donald Trump, annexation threats and an expected federal election. Carney, 59, replaces Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who announced his resignation in January but remained in power until the Liberal Party elected a new leader. Carney is widely expected to trigger a general election in the coming days or weeks. The governing Liberal Party had appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared economic war and has said Canada should become the 51st state. Carney has said he's ready to meet with Trump if he shows "respect for Canadian sovereignty" ***—PTI***

India rejects Pak's claims, calls it epicenter of terrorism

India tells Pak to introspect its failures, not shift blame

NEW DELHI,14 MARCH

India on Friday dismissed Pakistan's claims of sponsoring terrorism following the recent Balochistan train attack, which resulted in the deaths of 21 passengers. The Indian government urged Islamabad to reflect on its own failures rather than deflecting blame onto others.

In response to media queries, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal strongly refuted Pakistan's "baseless allegations," emphasising that the "whole world knows where the epicentre of global terrorism lies." Jaiswal remarked, "Pakistan should look inwards instead of pointing fingers and shifting the blame for its own internal problems."

Randhir Jaiswal ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Balochistan train attack, which occurred earlier this week, prompted Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson, Shafqat Ali Khan, to accuse India without directly implicating it in the incident. Khan stated that terrorists involved in the attack were in communication with planners based in Afghanistan, reiterating Pakistan's call for Afghanistan to prevent the use of its territory by groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).

Khan indicated that Islamabad seeks accountability from Afghanistan for those responsible for the attack, asserting, "We urge Afghanistan to hold the perpetrators, organisers, and financiers of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable." He claimed that while India has previously been blamed for BLA activities, the current situation demonstrates a shift in focus towards Afghanistan.

When questioned about any change in policy, Khan maintained that Pakistan's stance remains the same, asserting, "India is involved in sponsoring terrorism against Pakistan," although he did not provide any evidence to support this claim. He further alleged that India has been attempting to destabilise its neighbouring countries and conducting a global assassination campaign, continuing the long-standing tensions between the two nations. *—PTI*

FESTIVAL OF COLOUR

People enjoy Holi by smearing colours on each other in Bengaluru on Friday. The festival, symbolising the victory of good over evil and the arrival of spring, brought communities together in a vibrant display of unity and happiness ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Russian President Vladimir Putin; Prime Minister Narendra Modi; US President Donald Trump ***PHOTOS: PTI***

Putin thanks PM, Trump for Ukraine peace efforts

MOSCOW, 14 MARCH

Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed gratitude to global leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for their commitment to resolving the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Speaking publicly for the first time about Ukraine's ceasefire proposal, Putin confirmed Russia's willingness to discuss a truce while emphasising the need for clarity on the terms of any agreement.

In previous statements dating back to July 2024, Putin has indicated that Moscow seeks more than temporary pauses in hostilities, preferring to address the root causes of the conflict. His remarks came on the same day that Washington and Ukraine endorsed a 30-day ceasefire following discussions between their delegations in Saudi Arabia.

"I would like to begin by thanking President Trump for his focus on resolving the conflict in Ukraine," Putin stated. He acknowledged the contributions of various leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Prime Minister Modi, and the leaders of Brazil and South Africa, recognising their efforts as a "noble mission" aimed at ceasing hostilities and saving lives.

- Since the outbreak of conflict in February of last year, Prime Minister Modi has engaged with both President Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Since the outbreak of conflict in February of last year, Prime Minister Modi has engaged with both President Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. During a recent meeting with Trump at the White House, Modi emphasised that "India is not neutral" regarding the situation, advocating for peace and supporting Trump's diplomatic initiatives. *—PTI*

B'luru MLAs 'blackmailing' us: DKS on garbage crisis

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday alleged that the city MLAs across political parties are "blackmailing" the government over City's garbage crisis.

He said that the MLAs are demanding Rs 800 crore in development funds and alleged there is a "big mafia" controlling the City's waste management.

MLC M Nagaraju pointed out that many garbage transporting vehicles are stranded on the roads due to lack of waste disposal facilities. He also expressed concerns about waste not being cleared from the city.

Shivakumar said that legal hurdles are delaying government efforts to streamline solid waste management.

He said that the government had planned to divide the City's garbage disposal work into four packages and transport waste 50 km away, but the initiative has been stalled.

He told the Council that for the past three days vehicles were stranded in Mahadevapura in the city.

Shivakumar appealed to the MLAs to help the BBMP identify 100 acres of land in Kolar, Nelamangala, Kanakapura Road, or next to a forest land.

"I (government) will purchase it (land) and get a permanent solution. I asked the Industries Minister for 100 acres land, to which he wondered whether garbage be dumped inside industries?" Shivakumar said. Two locations have been identified for waste disposal – one is with the Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprise (NICE) Road authorities and another one in Doddaballapura. According to him, technologies exist to manage waste disposal efficiently without causing inconvenience to anyone or contaminating groundwater through leachate. He said that all the governments have failed to find a humane solution and told the House that he would give a detailed reply on the issue on Monday.

"What was done in the past was not done from the human perspective. Siddaramaiah and even the BJP had made promises but ultimately we have failed. We have to make a respectful arrangement for garbage disposal," he noted. He told the House that he would give a detailed reply on the issue on Monday. *—PTI*

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HOLI HORROR

4 students fall ill after miscreants throw chemical-mixed colours

GADAG, 14 MARCH

Four schoolgirls fell ill—two of them critically—after being doused with chemically mixed colours in Lakshmeshwar taluk of Gadag district. The victims, identified as Gouri Pujar, Divya Lamani, Ankita, and Tanusha, were attacked by miscreants who threw chemical-laced dry and wet colors on them while they were on their way to school in a bus.

According to the bus driver, despite being informed that the students had to attend an examination, a group of youths forcefully applied the colours on the girls. Preliminary reports suggest that the harmful mixture contained cow dung, eggs, mud, and fertilizers. The affected students were immediately hospitalised at Gadag Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) and are reported to be out of danger.Influenced by Maharashtra's traditions, certain regions in North Karnataka, including Belagavi and Uttara Kannada, observed Colours Day on Friday. In contrast, areas like Vadagavi in Belagavi, Hubballi-Dharwad, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Gadag, and Haveri districts celebrate the festival's Colours Day on the fifth day after burning Kammanna on Tuesday.

One of the students who fell ill after miscreants threw chemical infused colour on them, is admitted to GIMS hospital in Gadag ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Several organisations, including Belagavi South BJP legislator Abhay Patil, organized public festivities to mark the occasion. Patil, continuing his tradition, hosted Rang Milan at Lele Grounds, where hundreds of participants danced to Kannada and Hindi songs performed by musical groups. However, Womania, a dedicated Holi celebration for women, which is usually organised by Minister for Women and Child Development Lakshmi Hebbalkar at Beynon-Smith College of Physical Education, was not held this year.

To maintain law and order, police enforced strict security measures across Belagavi. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

RAO DENIED BAIL IN GOLD SMUGGLING CASE

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

A Special Court for Economic Offences today rejected the bail application of Kannada actress Harshavardhini Ranya, also known as Ranya Rao, who is embroiled in a gold smuggling case. Ranya, the stepdaughter of K Ramachandra Rao, a Director General of Police rank officer, is currently held in Parappana Agrahara Jail.

Additionally, Tarun Raju, the second accused and alleged accomplice, has been remanded to judicial custody for 15 days. It has been reported that Raju was instrumental in coordinating the transport and distribution of the gold within India. *—PTI*

Attack on elderly in-laws; woman doctor booked

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

A woman doctor has been booked for allegedly assaulting her elderly in-laws and issuing life threats after forcibly entering their house in RHCS Layout. A video of the incident, captured by a bystander, has gone viral on social media. The accused- Dr Priyadarshini N, of Victoria Government Hospital in Bengaluru, was seen physically attacking her 79-year-old father-in-law, Narasimhaiah, and his wife at their residence in Annapoorneshwari Layout. The elderly couple, both battling serious health conditions—Narasimhaiah reportedly suffering from heart ailments and his wife undergoing cancer treatment—were visibly distressed during the altercation. The incident occurred on 10 March. — *Salar News*

PHOTO: X

Cops seize drugs worth Rs 46L in City; 3 arrested

BANGALORE, 14 MAR

In a coordinated effort, the police arrested three individuals involved in the sale of prohibited drugs and illegal tobacco products in separate operations across the city. Speaking to reporters on Friday, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B. Dayananda said that on Wednesday, two individuals were apprehended at Jodi Road, Narayan Nagar, with narcotics, including hashish oil and ganja. Acting on a tip-off, the police seized the drugs, valued at Rs 46.10 lakh. The duo, who confessed to sourcing the contraband from Odisha, are now in custody. Efforts are underway to identify and track the suppliers in Odisha who provided the drugs to the accused. In a separate operation, the Anti-Narcotics Squad of the City Crime Branch (CCB) raided a godown near Kalasipalya, apprehending a suspect for storing non-compliant tobacco products. — *Salar News*

Outrage as two patients die at GIMS in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 14 MARCH

Two patients reportedly lost their lives due to a lack of timely medical treatment at the Gulbarga Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) hospital late Thursday night, igniting outrage among their families, who have accused the hospital staff of negligence. The deceased Sharadabai,65 from Bharat Nagar Tanda and Dasharath Rathod, 50, from Udanur Tanda. "As instructed by the nurses, we submitted blood tests by 4pm, but the doctors ignored them, alleged Sharadabai's daughter. District surgeon Dr Asna Baig stated that they had pre-existing health issues and that critical treatment had not been administered. — *Salar News*

Serial ATM robbery attempts foiled in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

In a daring yet futile heist attempt, an unidentified man targeted two ATM kiosks in separate areas of the city during the early hours of Friday. The first attempt took place around 3.30am at a Canara Bank ATM near Swathi Junction. After struggling for nearly two minutes he hastily fled the scene. Undeterred he struck again about an hour later, this time targeting an HDFC Bank ATM on Bylasandra Main Road, within Tilak Nagar police station limits. Once again, he attempted to force open the cash box but was unsuccessful. Faced with another failure, he fled the scene before police arrived."In both cases, our patrol teams reached the locations within three to four minutes," an official from the Bengaluru Police Commissioner's office told Salar News. " — *Salar News*

Residents question Cauvery water mandate

Citizens claim they are burdened with installation costs and say builders should be responsible

SARAH FAZAL
BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

In January 2025, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar directed the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to ensure that all apartment buildings within BBMP limits have Cauvery water connections PHOTO: PTI

Bengaluru residents living in apartment complexes are questioning the government move to make Cauvery water connections mandatory at their buildings.

In January 2025, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar directed the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to ensure that all apartment buildings within BBMP limits have Cauvery water connections.

This directive followed an Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and BWSSB study that warned of severe water shortage in 80 wards of the city due to groundwater depletion.

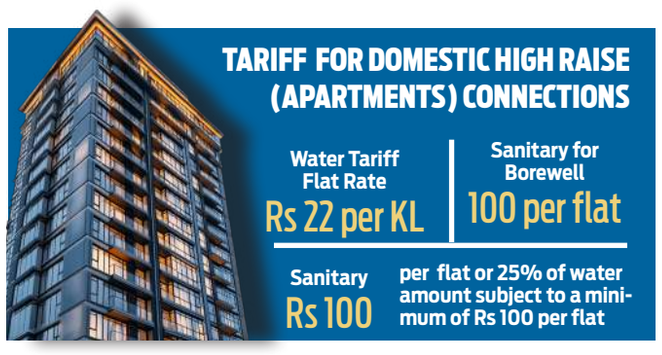
Even as BWSSB Chairman V Ram Prashat Manohar supported Shivakumar's view, the apartment dwellers are sceptical about their intensions.

The issues at hand are the State government's insistence on making Cauvery water connections mandatory for apartments, reluctance of many apartment complexes to take these connections and justification of the infrastructure cost of the Cauvery Stage V project. Dhananjaya Padmanabhachar, convenor of the Karnataka Home Buyers Forum, welcomed the government's initiative but said it unfairly burdens flat owners who do not have land ownership rights.

He said securing water and electricity connections should be the builder's responsibility.

"The government should not issue occupancy certificates unless these essential services are in place. Without land transfer, apartment associations have no legal standing to apply for connections under Section 17 of RERA. Instead of holding builders accountable, the authorities are shifting the burden onto flat owners," he said.

Assistant Engineer (Mahadevapura) Mirza Anwar at the BWSSB said. "The BWSSB doesn't require ownership documents of apartment complexes (for water connections). It's similar to obtaining a BESCOM connection. We go by the property, and ownership isn't a concern. I understand there is a small hustle between the builder and apartment associations. We are intervening to resolve it," he said.


TARIFF FOR DOMESTIC HIGH RAISE (APARTMENTS) CONNECTIONS
Water Tariff Flat Rate
Rs 22 per KL
Sanitary for Borewell
100 per flat
Sanitary
Rs 100
per flat or 25% of water amount subject to a minimum of Rs 100 per flat

Vani Kishore, a city resident, raised similar concerns about the lack of transparency in the process. "We haven't applied for a connection because the process is unclear. Since common areas in apartments are under the builder's name, it is their responsibility to ensure we receive the water connection," she said.

Bribery and hidden costs

According to BWSSB data, 2,643 apartments applied for Cauvery water connections during the November 2024 campaign, and 1,252 are yet to do so.

A resident from Kanakapura alleged corruption in the process and accused middlemen of charging from residents lakhs of rupees to lay the water pipelines. "We paid a hefty amount to the government for the Cauvery connection and even received the meter. But for installation, which involves road cutting, more money – Rs 30 lakh to Rs 40 lakh – is being demanded. Despite having all permissions, we still have to pay a dozen middlemen to get the work done. The costs are excessive, forcing us to rely on water tankers," she claimed.

Cauvery Stage V cost

The Rs 5,500 crore Cauvery Stage V project, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), aims to supply 110 litres of water per day to 12 lakh people. However, experts question the transparency of the project's pricing.

Water conservation expert S Vishwanath criticised the lack of clarity in connection charges. "Citizens deserve transparency. The claim that borewell water is unfit for consumption is debatable, as most apartments have their own borewells. Forcing apartments to take Cauvery connections without convincing the rationale is unjustified," he said.

Meanwhile, BWSSB Assistant Executive Engineer (Mahadevapura) Mirza Anwar justified the rationale behind the high tariffs for Cauvery water connections. "We charge the high tariff to maintain our working capital. The BWSSB sources water from 150km away and has made significant capital investments for this. The current tariff is Rs 400 per square foot of built-up area. Though an entry fee is charged, BWSSB connection charges are Rs 22 per kilolitre and tanker charges are Rs 150. If the apartment does a financial analysis, the return on investment will fall between 4–6 years, and this is permanent."

—*Salar News*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during the Assembly Session at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Friday PHOTO: SALAR

No plans to shut down new universities: CM

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has clarified that a decision on the fate of new universities established in the state during the previous BJP government will be taken based on the findings of a cabinet sub-committee.

The committee, headed by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, has been tasked with reviewing the status of public universities in the state.

The issue was raised by BJP MLA and former Higher Education Minister CN Ashwath Narayan, who sought a discussion on the matter under an adjournment motion. However, BJP legislators questioned the Chief Minister's statement, pointing out that Shivakumar had earlier stated that the government would merge the new universities with their parent institutions. Leader of Opposition R Ashoka stated that the Chief Minister's statement was different from what had been said by the Deputy Chief Minister and the Higher Education Minister.

The Speaker of the Assembly, UT Khader, suggested that the issue could be raised during the budget discussion, and Siddaramaiah also indicated that the matter could be discussed at a later stage. The Speaker later agreed to allow a discussion on the matter next week. —*PTI*

INDIA alliance united, will attend meeting on delimitation: DKS

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that he will attend the meeting on delimitation, called by Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin on 22 March and reiterated that the INDIA alliance remains united on the issue.

Speaking about his participation, Shivakumar stated, "On behalf of the government and the party, my Chief Minister asked me to go there. But at the same time, we have to discuss this matter with the party High Command."

Regarding his position on the delimitation issue, Shivakumar said, "I am still at the discussion stage on this matter," emphasising that no final decision has been made yet.

DK Shivakumar PHOTO: PTI

He also reiterated the unity of the opposition alliance, stating, "INDIA alliance is always united," signaling that despite ongoing discussions, the alliance remains firmly committed to a collective approach on this important issue.

Meanwhile, Congress leader V Hanumantha Rao also backed Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin for calling a meeting of Chief Ministers and leaders of various parties regarding the proposed delimitation of Parliamentary constituencies, claiming that "South India" is being "completely" ignored. —*ANI*

MYSURU HOMEMAKER DIES BY SUICIDE OVER DOWRY HARASSMENT

MYSURU, 14 MARCH

A 25-year-old homemaker died by suicide by hanging herself at her residence in Shindenahalli, Hanagodu hobli, Hanur taluk, allegedly due to dowry harassment. According to the police, the deceased is Reshma(25). Shanthamma, police have arrested Srinivasa. In her complaint, Shanthamma alleged that Srinivasa, along with his brother Sridhar and their parents, Saraswathamma and Madegowda, repeatedly harassed Reshma both mentally and physically over dowry demands. —*Salar News*

IFTAR MEET

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan with Lok Sabha MP KC Venugopal at Congress Ward Presidents' meeting & Iftar meet organised by DCC Malappuram on Friday PHOTO: SALAR

Mysuru mosque reopening causes Hindu-Muslim divide

MYSURU, 14 MARCH

Deputy Commissioner Lakshmikanth Reddy convened a meeting on Friday with Hindu and Muslim community leaders regarding the reopening of a mosque in the sensitive Kyathamaranahalli area of the Narasimharaja assembly segment. The location has a troubled history, having been the site of communal tension that led to the murder of right-wing activist Raju eight years ago.

The court has mandated that the Deputy Commissioner resolve the issue. Hindu community leaders urged Reddy prevent the mosque's reopening, while Muslim representatives argued that the building is not a mosque but a madrasa.

Hindu leader Shivakumar advocated for maintaining the status quo, citing past incidents related to the disputed site. Meanwhile, Muslim leader Shoukat Ali emphasised their commitment to operating the madrasa without causing disturbances.

—*Salar News*

HC stays summons against ex-CM BSY

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

The Karnataka High Court has granted a reprieve to former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa by staying the trial court's order that had summoned him to appear on 15 March, in connection with a POCSO case. This development comes after Yediyurappa challenged the trial court's order in the High Court.

A case had been registered against Yediyurappa under the POCSO Act, alleging that he had sexually assaulted a minor girl at his residence in Bengaluru in February 2024. The girl's mother had filed a complaint with the police, accusing Yediyurappa of molesting her daughter and attempting to cover up the incident by offering her money. The trial court had issued summons to Yediyurappa and co-accused YM Aruna, Rudresha, and Marulasiddhaiah G Mariswami to appear on 15 March. However, the High Court's stay order has put a hold on the trial court's proceedings. The High Court had previously granted Yediyurappa anticipatory bail instructing that he should not be arrested and exempting him from attendance during the trial. The BJP has alleged a "political conspiracy" by the ruling Congress party against Yediyurappa. —*ANI*

COOLING RELIEF

To help employees cope with the scorching summer, Rajarajeshwari Nagar BMTC depot distributes free buttermilk to staffers. It was launched with support from NGOs and is expected to continue till May PHOTO: SALAR

CIVILIANS STRUGGLE

Garbage crisis deepens as protests halt waste collection in City

HAMEED ASHRAF
BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Auto tippers loaded with garbage parked at Cottonpet PHOTO: SALAR

For Bengaluru residents protesting against household waste and other garbage not being cleared from their localities regularly, excuses have become routine. Some go like this: "I was not feeling well and there is no one to work on my behalf," says Ramesh, a civic worker in Byatarayanapura. Mani, who is in-charge of Vijayanagar Pipeline Road, says "I was assigned a different route."

In some neighbourhoods, heaps of garbage have been rotting for days, spreading stench. **Salar News** has found that the real reason behind the piling up of waste is not the absence of Pourakarmikas. It is a complete breakdown of coordination in Bengaluru's civic agencies. For over three days, garbage was not cleared in several areas in the city, including Nayandahalli, Kengeri, Kamakshipalya, Basaveshwar Nagar, Vijayanagar, Govindaraj Nagar, Chamarajpet, Majestic, Laggere, Rajarajeshwari Nagar and Yeshwanthapura and Yelahanka.

"The drain has been left open for around 20 days. We have complained to the authorities several times. The line got blocked a few days back after some people dumped garbage in it. Non of the civic agencies we contacted responded to our complaints," said Vishnuvardhan, a resident of Azad Nagar.

"At night, many people come and dump garbage here," said Sumanth Kumar, a senior citizen in Amruth Nagar. The crisis, however, goes beyond just missing garbage trucks. It has escalated into a full-blown standoff between residents and waste management authorities. BJP legislators raised the issue in the Assembly on Thursday, highlighting that garbage disposal has been disrupted for the past three days.

Malleswaram MLA CN Ashwathnarayan said villagers in Mittaganahalli and surrounding areas have blocked over 500 garbage trucks from entering the local waste processing facilities. They accuse the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML) of reckless waste disposal that endangers their health and environment. The Mittaganahalli yard processes more than 65 per cent of Bengaluru's waste. With entry of more than 450 compactor trucks stalled, the process is stuck. Some of these garbage-laden vehicles have been stuck near KR Market flyover, unable to proceed due to the protests. Truck drivers, stranded at the waste yard for days, say they are caught in the crossfire. The protest is not unwarranted. The Kannur Gram Panchayat has complained to Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner Shalini Rajaneesh about the unscientific dumping at Mittaganahalli landfill.

Kathyayini Chamaraj, an urban governance expert, cited High Court orders mandating decentralised waste processing at the ward level. "Instead of spending huge amounts of money on tunnel roads, Deputy CM DK Shivakumar should prioritise setting up biomethanisation and biocomposting units in every ward," she said.

"Local residents have blocked 360 garbage trucks. We are in talks with the villagers. We hope to resolve the issue soon," said M Lokesh, chief engineer of the BSWML. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Shah to begin Northeast visit on Friday

GUWAHATI, 14 MARCH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Jorhat on Friday evening for his three-day visit to the northeastern states of Assam and Mizoram, officials said. Shah was received at Jorhat airport by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and others. "We warmly welcome Hon'ble Union Minister AmitShah to the sacred land of Assam," Sarma said on X. Shah is set to inaugurate a function police academy in Asam, and then travel to Mizoram where he will attend a function for the shifting Assam Rifles establishments. On Sunday he will review the progress of the BNS in the Northeast with the chief ministers of the eight states. *—PTI*

78-member South Korean delegation visits Ayodhya

AYODHYA, 14 MARCH

A 78-member delegation of South Korean citizens paid a two-day visit to Ayodhya, commemorating their cultural roots, Mayor Girish Pati Tripathi said on Friday. The delegation of South Korea's Karak clan visited the Queen Heo Memorial Park at Naya Ghat and paid tribute at the monument. They visited the Ram temple and attended the 'aarti' on the banks of the Saryu river on Thursday. According to Korean legend, a teenage princess from Ayodhya crossed the ocean in a boat some 2,000 years ago, sailed to Korea, and married King Kim Suro who founded the Gaya kingdom. The princess, Suriratna, then became Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Around 60 lakh people in South Korea, consider themselves to be descendants of Suriratna, and see Ayodhya as their maternal homeland.*—PTI*

Himachal: Former Cong MLA shot at his residence

BILASPUR, 14 MARCH

Former Congress MLA from Bilaspur, Bamber Thakur was shot at by unidentified people at his residence on Friday, police said. Thakur along with his personal security officer were injured in the attack, police said. The attackers fired around 12 rounds of bullets, a witness said. The former MLA was sitting in the courtyard of the government accommodation allotted to his wife along with others when four people came and opened fire. Thakur suffered a bullet injury on his leg. A manhunt has been launched to catch the culprits who reportedly ran on foot towards the main market, SP Sandeep Dhawal said. Thakur was referred to Indira Gandhi Medical College, Shimla while the PSO was rushed to the AIIMS Bilaspur. *—PTI*

Mining to resume in Goa, Minister Reddy says

PANAJI, 14 MARCH

Union minister G Kishan Reddy has said that iron ore mining activity in Goa, which has been halted in the coastal state since 2018, will resume in next six months. He was talking to reporters on Thursday after launching the country's first-ever auction of Exploration Licences for 13 exploration blocks for critical minerals. Reddy said all issues related to environmental concerns, revenue generation and employment opportunities would be addressed during resumption of the mining activity. He said he had a productive discussion on each mineral block in the state. Reddy chaired a review meeting on Thursday in Goa to know the status of the auctioned mines, plans to auction more mineral blocks as well as non-operational mining leases in coastal state.*—PTI*

TN Budget: New airport & free buses for women

AIADMK alleges DMK govt is responsible for Rs 1,000cr TASMAC scam; Senthil raps 'hasty' ED

CHENNAI, 14 MARCH

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin-led DMK regime presented its Budget 2025-26 in the Assembly, a full-fledged exercise ahead of the state election next year and made big allocations for its flagship welfare schemes including the fare-free bus travel scheme for women and announced one per cent reduction in registration fee for immovable assets registered in their name.

Presenting the Budget, Finance Minister Thangam Thenarasu said women using fare-free bus services has risen to 65 per cent from 40 per cent.

"On an average, 50 lakh women travel daily in the buses run by State Transport Undertakings, leading to a total of 642 crore trips so far. Women save an average of Rs 888 per month due to this initiative. For the year 2025-26, the government has allocated a subsidy of Rs 3,600 crore for the scheme in the Budget Estimates," he said.

AIADMK, led by party General Secretary Edapadi K Palanisamy walked out of the Assembly on the first day of the Budget session *PHOTO: PTI*

He also announced a new airport at Rameswarm,and expedition of work to establish a new airport at Parandur.

Further, he announced that the registration fee for all immovable assets, including houses, plots and agricultural lands, valued up to Rs 10 lakh will be reduced by one per cent when registered in the name of women.

The main opposition AIADMK meanwhile, walked out of the Assembly after attempting to raise alleged graft in state-run liquor corporation Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) vis-a-vis the Enforcement Directorate searches over the Rs 1,000 crore 'scam'.

"The whole budget is an eyewash. There's nothing productive about it," Leader of Opposition, Edappadi K Palaniswami.

He said the move the change the rupee symbol in parliament was merely to divert attention from the TASMAC scam.

Meanwhile, Excise Minister V Senthil Balaji said the alleged scam had no basis and asserted that the TASMAC functioned with transparency. It has not been made clear by ED authorities as to which of the FIRs constituted the basis for initiating action, he said.

"Legal action will be taken in the matter," he said.

He questioned the "hasty" release of ED statement on 13 March evening, a day before the presentation of state Budget, and alleged that it was an mischievous attempt to "hide" the welfare schemes and state initiatives aimed at benefitting the people. *—PTI*

CREATOR OF RUPEE SYMBOL REFUSES TO BE DRAWN INTO CONTROVERSY

D Udaya Kumar *PHOTO: SALAR*

GUWAHATI, 13 MARCH

After the Tamil Nadu government released a new rupee logo for the state budget, IIT Guwahati Professor D Udaya Kumar, who designed the Indian rupee symbol, refused to be drawn into the controversy, saying it was a mere coincidence that his father was a DMK MLA.

"I don't have any reaction. It's the government which suddenly felt that there was a need for a change and they wanted to implement their own script. This is up to the state government. So, I don't have anything to say about that.," Kumar told PTI.

Kumar's father N Dharmalingam was an MLA from the Rishivandiyam constituency in 1971 from the DMK party.

"My father was an MLA even before I was born. Now, he is old and living in our village, leading his life peacefully. It just happened to be a coincidence," the professor said. *—PTI*

Replacing rupee symbol shows dangerous mindset: FM

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

- Union Finance Minister Sitharam said the Indian rupee symbol, originally designed by the son of a DMK MLA, and by changing it, the Tamil Nadu government was erasing their own accomplishments

DMK-led Tamil Nadu government move to replace the rupee symbol signals a dangerous mindset Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday.

It weakens Indian unity and promotes secessionist sentiments under the pretence of regional pride.

Launching a scathing attack on DMK, she said the party should have protested when the rupee symbol was adopted by the UPA in 2010.

"Ironically, rupee symbol was designed by D Udaya Kumar, the son of former DMK MLA N Dharmalingam. By erasing it now, the DMK is not only rejecting a national symbol but also utterly disregarding the creative contribution of a Tamil youth," she said.

The attack comes on the day when DMK government has reportedly removed the official Rupee symbol ' ' from the Tamil Nadu Budget 2025-26 documents, which will be presented on Friday.

"This is more than mere symbolism – it signals a dangerous mindset that weakens Indian unity and promotes secessionist sentiments under the pretence of regional pride. A completely avoidable example of language and regional chauvinism," Sitharaman said on X.

"The rupee symbol is internationally well-recognized and serves as a visible identity of India in global financial transactions. At a time when India is pushing for cross-border payments using UPI, should we really be undermining our own national currency symbol?" she asked. *—PTI*

Kerala CM backs Stalin's anti-delimitation conference

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 14 MARCH

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressed his solidarity on Friday with the upcoming conference hosted by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin, aimed at opposing the BJP-led central government's "unilateral parliamentary constituency delimitation attempt."

Vijayan, a seasoned Marxist politician, conveyed his support through a statement titled "Constituency Delimitation: Unity Against the Unilateral Move." His endorsement followed a personal visit from Tamil Nadu IT Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan and MP Dr Tamizhachi Thangapandian, who extended Stalin's invitation for the all-party conference scheduled for 22 March in Chennai.

Pinarayi Vijayan *PHOTO: PTI*

- Kerala CM Vijayan backed the Stalin's meet but did not confirm whether he would attend the event

"In the face of the central government's rush to redefine Lok Sabha constituencies without regard for the values of democracy and federalism, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has invited me to join an all-party solidarity conference," Vijayan's statement read. He voiced his agreement with the conference's stance, but did not specify whether he would attend the event.

During their visit to Vijayan's office, the Tamil Nadu representatives also gifted him a copy of Stalin's autobiography. Earlier, Union Home Minister Amit Shah assured southern states that they would not lose "even a single seat" as a result of the delimitation process. The 22 March meeting aims to address concerns over the proposed changes to parliamentary constituencies. *—PTI*

Shiv Sena leader predicts Jayant Patil's shift to NCP

MUMBAI, 14 MARCH

Shiv Sena leader and Maharashtra minister Sanjay Shirsat has asserted that senior NCP (SP) politician Jayant Patil is likely to leave Sharad Pawar's party to join the Ajit Pawar-led faction of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Shirsat stated, "I have said this in the past. Jayant Patil is in no mood to stay in NCP (SP) for long. There will be an earthquake in Sharad Pawar's party; you will see Jayant Patil joining Ajit Pawar's NCP." His comments followed Patil's ambiguous remarks, sparking speculation about a potential rift in the NCP (SP).

Congress legislature party leader Vijay Wadettiwar noted that Patil, who leads the state unit of NCP (SP), has appeared upset recently, leaving much to interpretation regarding his intentions.

Sanjay Shirsat *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

NCP minister Hasan Mushrif acknowledged that Patil's discontent is evident, suggesting that it may be challenging to maintain the NCP (SP) intact going forward.

In a lighter response, NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule described Shirsat's claim as a compliment, indicating that even rival parties recognize Patil's significance.

The NCP split in 2023, resulting in Ajit Pawar forming NCP, while Sharad Pawar held the NCP (SP). *—PTI*

Punjab Shiv Sena leader killed, boy injured in shooting

MOGA, 14 MARCH

A Shiv Sena leader, Mangat Rai alias Manga, was shot dead late Thursday night, while a 12-year-old boy was injured during the incident. Manga, the Moga district president Shiv Sena, was attacked by three unidentified assailants around 10pm while out for groceries. Initially, a bullet missed Manga and struck the boy instead. After fleeing on a two-wheeler, Manga was shot again by his pursuers. He was pronounced dead at the hospital, while the injured boy was later referred for advanced treatment. Six have held been as investigations continue. *—PTI*

Hurriyat chief Farooq under house arrest

SRINAGAR , 14 MARCH

.Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the Hurriyat Conference and Kashmir's chief cleric, was placed under house arrest on Friday, preventing him from attending congregational prayers at Jamia Masjid, officials reported. He was detained at his residence in the Nigeen area of Srinagar.

The Hurriyat chief had intended to visit Jamia Masjid in the Nowhatta locality for the Friday prayers, where he traditionally delivers a sermon. This development follows the Indian government's recent decision to impose a five-year ban on the Mirwaiz-led Awami Action Committee (AAC) and Shia leader Masroor Abbas Ansari's Jammu Kashmir Ittihadul Muslimeen (JKIM) for alleged anti-national activities and support for terrorism.

> However some bigots have now converted this celebration into a source of fear for minorities with the approval of those in power. It's time to wake up India. Wishing everyone a Happy Holi!"
>
> -Mehbooba Mufti
> People's Democratic Party chief

The Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid, the mosque's managing body, condemned Mirwaiz's house arrest, calling it an "arbitrary and unjustified move" occurring during the holy month of Ramadan, which holds significant spiritual importance for Muslims globally. The Auqaf stated that preventing the Mirwaiz from fulfilling his religious duties and denying the faithful access to his sermons "deeply hurts the religious sentiments of the people." They demanded his immediate release from house detention, arguing such restrictions during Ramadan violate principles of religious freedom. *—PTI*

HC strikes down section of Goa Planning Act

PANAJI, 14 MARCH

The Goa Bench of Bombay High Court has struck down a section of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1974, that allowed the creation of zones within zones, holding that it was concerned with private land owners' interests.

Three citizen organisations had filed a public interest litigation in the HC contending that section 17(2) of the Act was "mutilating" the Regional Plan. The section was aimed at allowing the authorities to correct inadvertent errors or rectify inconsistent or incoherent zoning.

The court said that "such plot-by-plot conversion, creating a zone within a zone, virtually has the effect of mutilating the Regional Plan (RP) prepared after such an elaborate exercise".

The RP is a development blueprint to guide infrastructure, in the state. — PTI

BJP, RSS call for Tushar Gandhi's arrest over remarks

T'PURAM, 14 MARCH

Tushar Gandhi, great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, announced on Friday that he will not retract or apologise for his recent controversial remarks about the RSS and BJP, whom he described as "dangerous and insidious enemies" during a statue unveiling in Neyyattinkara.

Gandhi had referred to the RSS as "poison," prompting protests from BJP-RSS workers who subsequently blocked his car.

Speaking at an event in Aluva, near Kochi, Gandhi reaffirmed his stance, stating "What this incident has done is strengthen my resolve to continue to expose the traitors. We have a common enemy now, the Sangh. They must be exposed." He expressed concern that the descendants of his great-grandfather's assassins might desecrate Mahatma Gandhi's statue.

In response, BJP leader V Muraleedharan accused Tushar Gandhi of "monetising" his great-grandfather's legacy and called for his arrest. Muraleedharan emphasised that having the Gandhi name does not entitle Tushar to the same respect afforded to the "Father of the Nation."

Tushar Gandhi *PHOTO: ANI*

- Thushar Gandhi had described the BJP/RSS as "poison" and "dangerous and insidious enemies"

The Pinarayi Vijayan government had recently arrested five individuals linked to the Sangh Parivar for shouting slogans against Tushar, prompting sharp criticism from Muraleedharan. *—PTI*

AFTER BEERBICEPS CONTROVERSY

Panel urges govt to enact Broadcasting Bill

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

A parliamentary panel has nudged the government to spell out a timeline to introduce in Parliament the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill that was shelved last year. The Bill saw a furore over certain provisions that sought to regulate individual content creators.

The committee, in its report tabled in the Lok Sabha earlier this week, asked the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting "to set a deadline for completing the entire process (of stakeholder consultation) and introduce the 'Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill' in Parliament at the earliest".

The suggestion follows the Supreme Court urging the government "to do something" about OTT regulation while hearing the case involving YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia for his comments on the comedy show "India's Got Latent".

The ministry had informed the committee on 17 January that a new draft of the Bill would be prepared and sent for inter-ministerial consultation.

The Parliament panel stressed the need for a comprehensive law, and reminded the government that more than three months had passed since time was given for receiving suggestions *PHOTO: ANI*

In its recommendations, the committee said more than three months had passed since the additional time was given for receiving comments and suggestions from the general public and stakeholders.

It stressed on the need for a comprehensive law and asked the government to apprise it of the progress made with respect to the Bill.

"The committee call upon the ministry to set a deadline for completing the entire process and introduce the 'Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill' in Parliament at the earliest," the report said.

The draft Broadcast Bill, 2023, was placed in the public domain on 10 November, 2023, inviting views, comments and suggestions from the general public and stakeholders until 9 December, 2023.

The second draft was shared selectively in July 2024. The government withdrew the second draft in August last year after backlash from various stakeholders. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Woman killed as law student rams car into bikes

VADODARA, 14 MARCH

A woman was killed on the spot and four others sustained injuries when a speeding car driven by a 20-year-old law student crashed into their two-wheelers in Gujarat's Vadodara city in the early hours of Friday, police said. The accident occurred around 12.30am near Muktanand cross roads in the Karelibaug area, following which the driver, Rakshit Chaurasiya, was arrested, said Deputy Commissioner of Police Panna Momaya. It could be a case of drunk driving as eyewitnesses, who caught Chaurasiya at the scene, told the police that he appeared intoxicated and was screaming "another round, another round" after coming out of the car, the official said. The deceased woman has been identified as Hemali Patel, who was riding her scooter at the time of the accident. —*PTI*

Children find woman's severed head in suitcase

PALGHAR, 14 MARCH

Police in Maharashtra's Palghar district have launched a probe after a woman's severed head was found in a suitcase, an official said on Friday. The discovery was made near Pirkunda Dargah in the Virar area on Thursday evening. A few local children found an abandoned suitcase and opened it out of curiosity. Police were subsequently alerted, the official said. Forensic experts will visit the site to collect evidence, the official from Mandvi police station said, adding that a probe is underway to unravel the murder. —*PTI*

Apartment fire kills 3 persons in Rajkot; 40 rescued

RAJKOT, 14 MARCH

Three persons were killed and one was injured after a massive fire broke out in a 12-storey residential building in Gujarat's Rajkot city on Friday morning, officials said. About 40 residents stuck in the tower located in the 150 feet ring road area were rescued, they said. "The fire broke out in a flat on the sixth floor of Atlantis Apartment around 9.30 am. It was caused due to a short circuit. Three persons have lost their lives in the fire while one injured person has been hospitalised," said Assistant Commissioner of Police BJ Chaudhary. The fire was brought under control around noon, said the official. Two of the three deceased victims have been identified as Kalpesh Leuva and Mayur Leuva. The identity of the third person is yet to be ascertained. —*PTI*

Five MP government staffers booked for ₹7 crore scam

JABALPUR, 14 MARCH

A case has been registered against five government employees in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur for allegedly embezzling nearly Rs 7 crore by putting up fictitious claims under post-retirement benefit schemes, a senior official said on Friday. Jabalpur District Collector Deepak Kumar Saxena said five staffers of the state finance department's local fund audit office pocketed Rs 6,99,20,000 by presenting online fake post-retirement claims and clearing them. He said that following an inquiry, Sandeep Sharma, Seema Amit Tiwari, Manoj Barhaiya, Priya and Anoop Kumar Bhourya were found guilty of misusing their position to withdraw the money from the government exchequer. The collector said that in some cases, the accused filed fake claims in the name of their relatives to embezzle money. —*PTI*

Six India properties listed for UNESCO recognition

One step closer to finding place in the World Heritage List

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

A set of six properties – including some considered serially, such as Ashokan Edict Sites and Chausath Yogini Temples spread across multiple states – have been added to India's tentative list by the UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.

These sites were added to the list on 7 March, the Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO said in a statement. India at UNESCO shared the statement on X late on Thursday.

The World Heritage Centre's tentative list is an inventory of properties each country intends to consider for UNESCO nomination. Addition to the list is mandatory if a property is to be nominated for inscription to the World Heritage List in future, it said.

India now has 62 sites on the tentative list PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The six properties added to the tentative list include Kanger Valley National Park in Chhattisgarh, Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs in Telangana, serial nomination of Ashokan Edict Sites along the Mauryan Routes (multiple states), serial nomination of Chausath Yogini Temples (multiple states), serial nomination of Gupta Temples in north India (multiple states) and the palace-fortresses of the Bundelas in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the statement said.

With these additions, India now has 62 sites on the tentative list.

According to the UNESCO website, the Chausath Yogini Temples considered serially includes sites at multiple locations in the country. "The Chausath Yogini Temples have 64 images of Yoginis in their individual shrines with intricate stone carvings circularly arranged. These temples are mostly situated on hilltops," reads a description on the UNESCO website.

At present, a total of 43 properties from India are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, including 35 in the 'Cultural' category, seven in 'Natural' and one in 'Mixed' category.

India hosted a World Heritage Committee meeting for the first time in 2024, during which the Moidams – the mound-burial system of the Ahom Dynasty in Assam – was accorded the coveted UNESCO tag. —*PTI*

SERVED 30 COUNTRIES

India made $143M in 10 years from foreign sat launch

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

India generated foreign exchange revenue worth USD 143M through launching foreign satellites during the period from 2015 to 2024, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Jitendra Singh, who looks after the space sector, informed Lok Sabha.

During the last 10 years starting from January 2015 to December 2024, a total of 393 foreign satellites and three Indian customer satellites have been launched on a commercial basis on board ISRO's PSLV, LVM3 and SSLV launch vehicles, the ministry apprised the Lok Sabha in a written reply.

India has launched satellites of 34 countries so far, including those of developed countries, since 2014. Of the total 393 foreign satellites that were launched, 232 were for the US and 83 for the UK.

Currently, space cooperative documents have been signed with 61 countries and five multilateral bodies. The major areas of cooperation are satellite remote sensing, satellite navigation, satellite communication, space science and planetary exploration and capacity building, the minister said in a separate reply to the Lok Sabha.

In 2023, India soared to new heights with the successful soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the South Pole of the Moon and with the success of Aditya-L1, India's first solar mission.

India is now preparing for its ambitious Gaganyaan mission, envisaging a demonstration of human space capabilities by launching a crew of astronauts into an orbit and then bringing back these human astronauts safely to earth by landing them in India's sea waters. —*ANI*

IIM Rohtak chief faces suspension

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Facing graft allegations, IIM-Rohtak director is set to be either suspended or sent on leave by the institution's board following directions from the government.

The director, sources said, has also been asked to stay away from the IIM campus or rented area of IIM Rohtak until further orders.

The Union Ministry of Education on Thursday asked the Board of Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Rohtak to either suspend institute Director Dheeraj Sharma or send him on leave till the completion of probe against him over alleged misappropriation of funds.

The allegations against Sharma include wrongfully inflating the financial health of IIM Rohtak and using such manipulated figures to pay a huge amount of variable pay (more than Rs one crore for each year) to the director of IIM Rohtak from 2018-19 onwards.

President Droupadi Murmu had earlier this month ordered an inquiry into the alleged misappropriation of public funds at IIM Rohtak during the tenure of Sharma as director of the institute.

The inquiry will also include the verification of the educational qualification certificates of Sharma and other staff recruited at IIM.

The probe against Sharma was launched following an inquiry conducted by the Principal Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of Education, which found serious irregularities and grave misappropriation of public funds at IIM Rohtak.

The ministry noted that Sharma's degree certificate was sought by it repeatedly during his first term as director of IIM Rohtak from 2017 to 2022 but was not sent by IIM Rohtak until the end of his tenure. —*PTI*

No one was injured in the accident that occurred near Bodwad station around 4.30 am PHOTO: ANI

Amravati Exp rams truck

MUMBAI, 14 MARCH

A speeding truck that crashed into a level-crossing gate and got stuck on railway tracks was hit by an express train in Maharashtra's Jalgaon district on Friday morning, officials said.

No one was injured in the accident that occurred near Bodwad station around 4.30 am, which disrupted rail services on the route for about six hours, he said.

The driver of a truck lost control over the wheel and rammed the vehicle into a level-crossing gate. It broke the barrier and got stuck on the tracks. The driver got down and was seeking help when the train hit the truck, the official said.

The alert loco pilot had spotted the truck on the tracks and slowed down the train, which averted a much bigger accident, he said.

Officials from the railways, local police, Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force rushed to the spot and launched an operation to clear the track, he said.

The track was cleared around 10.20 am and the train left for the next station. A case is being registered and a probe is underway, the official added. —*PTI*

2KG GANJA SEIZED FROM KOCHI COLLEGE HOSTEL

KOCHI, 14 MARCH

A stash of 2kg ganja was seized from the men's hostel of the Government Polytechnic College in Kalamassery of Kerala's financial capital during a raid, police said on Friday, adding that three students have been arrested.

Two of the students were released on station bail, while Akash, 21, a native of Kulathupuzha, Kollam, was booked under a separate FIR after authorities recovered 1.909kg of ganja from his room.

The second FIR names two other students – Adithyan, 21, a native of Haripad, Alappuzha, and Abhiraj, 21, a native of Karunagappally, Kollam – from whom 9.7 grams of ganja were seized. They were granted station bail, police officers said.

According to the police, the contraband was intended for both sale and personal use.

Thrikkakara Assistant Commissioner of Police PV Baby said the police conducted the raid based on a tip-off about huge quantities of ganja being stored on campus ahead of Holi celebrations. —*PTI*

Rescue operations on at Srisailam tunnel

NAGARKURNOOL, 14 MARCH

Rescue operations are underway in Nagarkurnool on Friday for seven workers still trapped inside the SLBC Tunnel of the Srisailam Left Bank Canal since 22 February.

On Tuesday, robotic teams entered the Srisailam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel for search and rescue operations for the trapped workers. 110 rescue personnel, along with Anvi Robo experts, entered the tunnel to carry out the operations.

Rescue teams have removed the body of one worker from inside the tunnel on March 10.

Following the incident, Telangana CM Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy expressed condolences over the death of the worker, identified as Gurpreet Singh, an official statement from Telangana CMO read.

Chief Minister Reddy also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 25 lakhs for the kin of the deceased.

Rescue teams have removed the body of one worker from inside the tunnel on March 10 PHOTO: PTI

On March 9, Telangana Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that robotic technology had been deployed to accelerate the ongoing rescue operations at the SLBC tunnel near Domalapenta in the Nagarkurnool district, where eight workers were trapped. Calling the incident a national disaster, he emphasised that the state government is utilizing the best global technology to overcome the challenges in the final stretch of the 14-kilometre-long tunnel. —*PTI*

- On Tuesday, robotic teams entered the Srisailam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel for search and rescue operations for the trapped workers. 110 rescue personnel, along with Anvi Robo experts, entered the tunnel to carry out the operations

4 officials booked for factory blast killing 9

BHANDARA, 14 MARCH

The blast in the ordnance factory in Maharashtra's Bhandara district on January 24, which claimed nine lives, was the result of alleged negligence in repairing machines and instruments, an official has said.

Four officials from the defence production unit, where trainees were allegedly made to work in highly sensitive areas, have been named in the FIR (first information report) registered on March 8 by the Jawahar Nagar police.

The police action is based on the findings of a probe committee formed after the accident that also left four injured, the official said on Thursday.

The FIR has named Devendra Meena, divisional officer of the safety section, Aadil Farooqui, junior works manager of the maintenance department, section administration officer Anandrao Faye, and Sanjay Dhapade from the general administration department. A few other unnamed officials have also been booked.

According to the police, an inquiry found that the "Extrumix machine and other instruments in the LTPE (Low Temperature Plastic Explosives) section of the RX department in building number 23" had deteriorated, but repairs were neglected, ultimately leading to the blast.

Also, trainees were assigned to work in highly sensitive sections of the unit. —*PTI*

AFTER COLDPLAY SUCCESS

Eminem planning first India gig

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

PHOTO: PTI

India is about to witness one of the most electrifying musical events of the decade as the Rap God, Eminem, prepares to set the stage on fire with his highly anticipated Eminem India Tour.

Following the resounding success of Coldplay's historic performance in Mumbai, Eminem is now ready to make history by performing in India for the first time.

The global hip-hop icon, known for his unparalleled lyrical prowess, hard-hitting verses, and record-breaking albums, will be embarking on a multi-city tour across India.

The tour is expected to attract thousands of fans eager to witness the rap legend deliver his greatest hits, including The Death of Slim Shady, Lose Yourself, Without Me, Not Afraid, Godzilla, and Rap God.

With over 220M records sold worldwide, 15 Grammy Awards and an Academy Award for Best Original Song, Eminem remains one of the most influential and best-selling artists of all time. His ability to blend storytelling with razor-sharp rhymes has cemented his status as a rap phenomenon, earning him a global fanbase that transcends generations. —*ANI*

Pak spy held from ordnance unit

LUCKNOW, 14 MARCH

The Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested an employee of an ordnance factory in Ferozabad for allegedly sharing confidential and sensitive information to Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, after falling into a honey trap, a senior officer said on Friday afternoon.

The accused has been identified as Ravindra Kumar.

According to Additional Director General (ADG) UP ATS Nilabja Choudhary, the accused, working at the Ordnance Factory in Hazratpur, district Firozabad, was called to ATS headquarters in Lucknow and arrested following a detailed interrogation.

The official further added that the accused, Kumar, passed the sensitive defence-related documents to a woman handler identified as 'Neha,' a Pakistani intelligence operative.

ADGP Nilabja Choudhary said the accused was arrested after a 'detailed interrogation' PHOTO: X

"ATS UP and their associate agencies got information that there is a person named Ravindra Kumar who was sharing different confidential and sensitive information with his Pak ISI handler.

So, working on this, our Agra unit did a preliminary interrogation of Ravindra Kumar, and he was called to ATS headquarters for a detailed interrogation, where it was proved that he shared very sensitive information through a handler named Neha," Choudhary said. "This ISI module has been around for a long time," he said.

The official added that during the interrogation, it was discovered that the accused occasionally shared the information with the said handler. "They honeytrap people and extract information from them, which poses a huge threat to national security"

"So, while interrogating him, we found out that he shared information with the said handler from time to time, which included the daily production report of the said Ordnance Factory (in which he was working) and the receipt of stores, other documents of criminal circulation, the stock that is about to arrive, the requisition, all were shared...," ADG Choudhary added. —*PTI*

TOOTH FAIRY

Egyptian wrestler Aahraf Mahrous, known by his nickname Kabonga, pulls a 279 tonne train with just his teeth in Cairo. In 2021, he pulled a train for 100m in under 40 seconds. He was awarded three Guinness World Records: heaviest rail pull using only teeth, heaviest locomotive pull and fastest 100m road vehicle pull
PHOTO: PTI

Ukraine ceasefire: What Russia, US, and EU want

The recent meeting of US representatives with Ukraine and then Russia has sparked a renewed hope for a ceasefire. Here's an overview of what's at stake.

While Russia seems like it will demand the withdrawal of NATO from Ukraine, US President Donald Trump's interests in the country is strongly tied to his business past ***PHOTO: PTI***

Russia

Experts believe Moscow wants to push NATO out of Eastern Europe, and increase Russian influence in Ukraine. "I don't think it's realistic that Russia will agree to something where Ukraine remains independent and sovereign," said Russia expert Janis Kluge from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, referencing Moscow's repeated demands that Ukraine should hold elections.

Russia is also very unlikely to return any of the Ukrainian territories it has already annexed. On the contrary: At the end of February, Putin offered US President Donald Trump a separate agreement that would allow the US to exploit resources in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories. Putin declared, in a television interview, that Russia was ready to "cooperate with foreign partners, including the Americans, in the new regions."

Moscow has a strong interest in persuading the West to lift the sanctions it has imposed since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The wartime economy initially triggered a boom in Russia, but this has now ground to a halt.

This strategy aligns with the conditions Moscow has set for any potential peace negotiations. They include Moscow's continued insistence that it will not tolerate any foreign peacekeeping troops in Ukraine. It is also not prepared to countenance Ukrainian membership in NATO.

United States

Trump wants to gain political capital by positioning himself as a broker of peace. Though he wasn't able to fulfill his campaign promise to end the war in Ukraine in 24 hours, he has managed to up the pressure on both Kyiv and Moscow.

At the recent meeting of G7 foreign ministers in Charlevoix, Canada, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said a "perfect" G7 joint statement after that meeting "would be that the United States has done a good thing for the world in bringing this process forward."

A peace agreement would also make it easier for Trump to reduce military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. This would align with his plans to reduce US engagement with NATO, and force European countries to increase their defense spending.

The US also has an interest in accessing raw materials. Ukraine has fossil resources, such as gas, and important mineral reserves. A proposed agreement between Ukraine and the US initially failed following the angry public exchange between Trump, US Vice President JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House at the end of February. Zelenskyy has since declared that he is ready to sign the agreement.

Observers are worried that the pressure Trump has placed on himself in promising to end the war quickly could lead him to make significant concessions to Putin.

European Union

The war in Ukraine, and the fear that the conflict might escalate, have prompted EU countries to drastically increase defense spending. Finland and Sweden, which remained neutral for decades, have now joined NATO.

Since the start of the war in February 2022, most EU member states have joined in imposing the EU's sanctions on Russia. "We must put Ukraine in the strongest possible position. Sanctions provide leverage," the EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said last month as the 27-nation bloc imposed its 16th round of sanctions.

Brussels also wants to curb Russia's growing influence in Europe, which is why it has offered Ukraine the prospect of EU membership.

In June 2022, the country became an official EU candidate country.

Countries sympathetic to or cooperating with Moscow include EU member states Hungary and Slovakia, and EU candidate Serbia.

In Romania, the far-right presidential candidate Calin Georgescu was supported by Moscow, but Romania's constitutional court since excluded him from participation in the election. *—DW News*

SALAR ساہر

Are Ukrainian people ready for concessions?

Russian President Vladimir Putin recently said he agrees "in principle" to the US-Ukraine accord on a ceasefire proposal, indicating a halt to the three-year war.

What isn't often talked about is what the Ukrainian people are willing to accept for peace. And while any armistice will likely be dictated by guns, territorial gains and great power geopolitics, it will be in large part down to ordinary Ukrainians to shape what happens afterward. An ugly peace may be accepted, but if it has little local legitimacy and support, unlikely to hold in the long run.

We have tracked public opinion in Ukraine from before the war and during the course of the conflict The responses give insights into how opinions in Ukraine have evolved since the Russian invasion of February 2022.

Unsurprisingly, three years of a brutal war of aggression has created tremendous stress among a population increasingly weary of war.

A December 2024 poll from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS),found that nearly 9 in 10 Ukrainians experienced at least one stressful situation in the previous year. Large shares reported stressful experiences related to bombing and shelling (39 per cent), separation from family members (30 per cent), surviving the death of loves ones (26 per cent) and the illness of loved ones (23 per cent). Only 10 per cent said they'd experienced no stressful situations.

Similarly, surveys we have conducted showed that by summer 2024, 84 per cent of the population had experienced violence in some form – be that physical injury at the hands of Russian forces, displacement, loss of family member and friends, or witnessing attacks.

But survey responses make clear that the country's political independence is a red line for the public – even if defending it comes at a very high cost.

Most Ukrainians still want Ukraine to continue fighting until the country's territorial integrity is restored, including Crimea. But that majority has diminished since the beginning of the war – from 71 per cent in 2022 to 51 per cent in 2024.

When we asked in July 2024 whether people agreed with the statement: "Russia should be allowed to control the territory it has occupied since 2022," 90 per cent disagreed. As such, there is very little evidence that Russia's territorial annexations – or an agreement recognizing these, which is what Russia wants – will have any legitimacy among Ukraine's population.

Neither Zelenskyy nor most Ukrainians trust Putin – hence there's a strong preference for any agreement being accompanied by security guarantees from NATO states.

Poll findings in the past month from KIIS reveal that 66 per cent of Ukrainians interpret Russia's war aims as an existential threat, comprising genocide against Ukrainians and destruction of its independent statehood. And 87 per cent believe Russia will not stop at the territories it already occupies. Negotiating with an enemy bent on Ukraine's destruction appears delusional to many Ukrainians.

As a defiant wartime leader, President Zelenskyy's popularity was very high in the immediate months after the invasion. Indeed, KIIS polls from May 2022 show that 90 per cent of the population expressed trust in him.

This has declined as the war has endured, but it has always remained above 50 per cent. Recent polling measuring his approval puts it at 63 per cent, an increase from 2024. Indeed, the very latest KIIS polls, from February through March of this year, show a 10-point jump in his trust rating to 67 per cent, a finding widely viewed as rallying in the face of US criticism.

Thus Zelenskyy's endorsement of any ceasefire and settlement will matter, though ceding territory is likely to be hazardous for him politically.

Conditions for a lasting peace

While the U.S.-Ukraine accord on a ceasefire has "put the ball" in Russia's court, it is unclear whether it will be enough to bring Putin to the table. And even if it does, given past precedent it is difficult to see him arriving as a compromiser rather than a conqueror.

What does appear clear is that whatever "peace" emerges looks set to hang more on Ukraine making concessions and accepting losses.

Such a peace can be negotiated behind closed doors.

But without public acceptance in Ukraine, whether it endures is a separate issue. *—The Conversation*

84 per cent of Ukrainians had experienced violence since the Russian invasion ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Will air pollution jack up health insurance costs in India?

Health insurance premiums in India, particularly in big cities like the capital, New Delhi, could become more expensive as insurers consider the impact of air pollution on policy pricing.

Discussions are underway to impose a 10-15 per cent increase in premiums for new health insurance policies in Delhi following a surge in pollution-related health claims in 2024.

Just this week, the World Air Quality Report 2024 by Swiss air quality technology company IQAir said Delhi remains the most polluted capital city globally, while India ranked as the world's fifth-most polluted country in 2024.

"Air pollution remains a significant health burden in India, reducing life expectancy by an estimated 5.2 years," it said.

According to the report, 13 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world are in India, with Byrnihat — a city on the Assam-Meghalaya border in the northeastern part of the country — having the world's worst air.

Air pollution causes surge in health issues

"Many non-communicable diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma are exacerbated by air pollution," said Manish Sarin, of Reliance General Insurance.

"It will be a good step if insurers factor in air pollution in future health policies. What is more important is that awareness goes up among the public," he added.

Yatharth Garg, fellow at the Insurance Institute of India, shared a similar view.

"There is no denying the fact that air pollution is rising in various metropolitan cities and is one of the factors in rising cases of health problems related to cardiovascular diseases," he told DW.

Garg pointed out that it's up to the insurers to regularly assess the risks and market conditions, and determine the insurance premiums paid by people.

Air pollution's impact on health is well documented, but proving it as the sole or primary driver of a percentage of health insurance claims requires detailed long-term data and studies.

To justify a 10-15 per cent raise in premiums, insurers will have to first update their pricing models to reflect pollution as a risk factor.

"Insurance policies cannot just factor air pollution in a place to increase premiums," Deepak Garg, from the National Insurance Company, told DW, noting that "important factors like age, lifestyle, existing comorbidities of the insurer must be considered."

'An epidemic of lung cancer soon'

In the past two years, hospital admissions in Delhi and surrounding areas saw a significant surge due to severe air pollution.

But the problem is not limited to the capital region alone, as air pollution affects huge swathes of the South Asian country.

The primary problem is airborne particulate matter, especially fine particles that are 2.5 microns or less in diameter, designated as "PM 2.5," which are small enough to enter air sacs in the lungs.

"We could be soon seeing an epidemic of lung cancer in India because of air pollution. Not only that, every system in the human body is affected by air pollution," Arvind Kumar, a surgeon who runs a medical non-profit called Lung Care Foundation in India, told DW.

Promilla Butani, a leading New Delhi pediatrician, who also suffers from asthma, dreads the clouds of pollution that blanket India's capital city on a regular basis.

13 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world are in India according to the World Air Quality 2024 Report. Delhi remains the most polluted capital city globally ***PHOTO: PTI***

She is excited by the proposal to factor in air pollution in health insurance policies.

"It is a brilliant proposal but how it'll be implemented is what's important and the finer details of the insurance policy need to be spelt out," Bhutani told DW.

Will it force authorities to act on air pollution?

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), tasked with overseeing the insurance industry, has yet to take an official stance on the matter.

The agency is expected to scrutinize the proposal's long-term impact on the insurance industry and public health policy, weighing whether it encourages insurers to address environmental risks or unfairly penalizes policyholders for systemic issues like pollution.

- Airborne particulate matter, especially fine particles that are 2.5 microns or less in diameter, designated as "PM 2.5," which are small enough to enter air sacs in the lungs.

Chandra Bhushan, a public policy expert and CEO of International Forum for Environment, Sustainability & Technology, pointed out that if pollution becomes a standard pricing factor, it could reshape the industry, requiring consistent monitoring of Air Quality Index and health trends across India.

"There is now enough evidence that high air pollution is directly linked to diseases and hence health costs. Therefore, for insurance companies to factor in air pollution risk is natural and reasonable," he told DW.

"This means that residents of cities like Delhi will have to pay more for health insurance than residents of cities like Kochi which has cleaner air," he added. "This should increase pressure on state governments to start giving due importance to air quality improvements." *—DW News*

UN accuses Israel of abuse; Bibi claims bias

The commission examined the widespread destruction of Gaza, use of explosives in civilian areas

GENEVA, 14 MARCH

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lashed out at the Human Rights Council, a UN-backed body that commissioned the team of independent experts, as an "anti-Israel circus" that "has long been exposed as an antisemitic, rotten, terrorist-supporting, and irrelevant body".

His statement comes following a UN report accusing Israel of "the systematic use of sexual, reproductive and other gender-based violence" in its war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The allegations came in one of the most extensive reports of its kind on the issue since Hamas' 7 October, 2023 attack on southern Israel ignited the war.

The findings by the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which seeks to document in minute detail the allegations and evidence of crimes to bolster accountability for perpetrators, could be used by prosecutors at the International Criminal Court or in other jurisdictions to try to bring justice to victims and their relatives.

In its report released on Thursday, the commission examined the widespread destruction of Gaza, the use of heavy explosives in civilian areas and Israeli attacks on hospitals and health facilities. It said all three led to "disproportionate violence against women and children".

The commission documented a range of violations perpetrated against Palestinian women, men, girls and boys and accused Israeli security forces of rape and sexual violence against Palestinian detainees. Israel denies any systematic abuse of prisoners and says it takes action when there are violations.

"Our report finds that Israel has increasingly employed sexual, reproductive, and other forms of gender-based violence against Palestinians as part of a broader effort to undermine their right to self-determination," Chris Sidoti, a member of the commission, told reporters in Geneva.

The commission stopped short of accusing Israel of genocide, as some advocacy groups and other rights experts have. Israel, which was established in the wake of the Nazi Holocaust and is home to many survivors and their families, has vigorously denied such allegations. *—PTI*

The allegations came in one of the most extensive reports of its kind on the issue since Hamas' 7 October, 2023 attack on Israel **PHOTO: ANI**

- The report documented a range of violations perpetrated against Palestinian women, men, girls and boys and accused Israeli security forces of rape and sexual violence against Palestinian detainees

The bodies of Palestinians killed during the war and were buried are now exhumed for identification and reburial in Gaza City **PHOTO:PTI**

US, Israel plan to relocate Palestinians to Africa: Report

JERUSALEM, 14 MARCH

The United States and Israel have discussed with three East African governments the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza to Sudan, Somalia and its breakaway region of Somaliland, according to US and Israeli officials.

The report said officials from Sudan claimed to have rejected overtures from the US, while officials from Somalia and Somaliland were unaware of any contacts.

US and Israeli officials confirmed the contacts with Somalia and Somaliland, while the US officials confirmed Sudan as well. They said it was unclear how much progress the efforts made or at what level the discussions took place. *—Agencies*

Guatemala boosts border security amid US pressure

OCOS, 14 MARCH

As the United States intensifies its border security objectives in Central America, Guatemala faces increasing scrutiny to bolster its own enforcement measures. On Thursday, Guatemalan army units patrolled the Suchiate River, which delineates the border with Mexico, as part of enhanced operations commenced in January, according to Col. Juan Ernesto Celis. President Bernardo Arévalo asserted that while migration is a right, it must be regulated. The military is focused on curbing illegal arms, drug, and human trafficking and frequently collaborates with Mexican forces. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

PIA flight lands safely in Lahore with missing wheel

LAHORE, 14 MARCH

A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) domestic flight landed at Lahore Airport with one of its rear wheels missing. Flight PK-306, which had departed from Karachi, arrived safely on Thursday morning, with no reports of any accidents. A PIA official confirmed that fragments of the missing wheel were found at Karachi Airport, suggesting it may have been in poor condition prior to take-off. The airline initiated an investigation to determine whether the wheel detached during departure or was absent before the flight took off. A PIA spokesperson stated that the aircraft made a "smooth and uneventful landing" and that all passengers disembarked as per routine. The aircraft's design features mitigations for such situations, which ensured safety throughout the flight. *—PTI*

Japan's Ishiba criticised over gifts to lawmakers

TOKYO, 14 MARCH

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba is being criticised for distributing gift certificates to 15 first-year lawmakers in his party in a scandal shaking his already weak grip on power. Ishiba has denied breaking political funding laws and said he won't resign. But opposition lawmakers and rivals in his own party have said the gifts were excessive and showed Ishiba was out of touch, especially after the governing Liberal Democratic Party had a disastrous election loss last year due to its earlier political funding irregularities. Japanese media reported earlier this week that Ishiba's aide delivered gift certificates worth USD 670 to the offices prior to their private dinner with the Prime Minister. Ishiba admitted giving the gift certificates as a souvenir. *—PTI*

Sri Lanka gears up for its first ever animal census

COLOMBO, 14 MARCH

Sri Lanka will conduct its first-ever animal census, excluding elephants, officials said on Friday. They said people across the island will count Toque monkeys, purple-faced langurs, giant squirrels, and peacocks between 8 and 8.05am on Saturday. The aim is to assess the impact of human wildlife conflict on annual crop damage. GVV Shamini, Additional Director for Development from the Department of Agriculture, said around 40,000 state officials covering over 14,200 administrative units nationwide will be deployed for the census. "The data will be important for assessing crop losses and action needed to minimise the impact on animals," said J Pushpakumara, Director of the Ministry of Agriculture. Officials said they anticipated 80 per cent accuracy in the census. *—PTI*

SAFETY FIRST

Passengers standing on an American Airlines plane's wing as smoke surrounds the aircraft. Twelve people were taken to hospitals after the plane landed at Denver International Airport and caught fire, prompting slides to be deployed so passengers could evacuate quickly **PHOTO: X**

Rehire laid-off workers: Judge to Trump admin

SAN FRANCISCO, 14 MARCH

A federal judge in Maryland has temporarily halted mass firings of probationary federal employees, with thousands ordered to be reinstated following a lawsuit filed by 19 states and the District of Columbia. The suit alleges that the mass dismissals, which have seen at least 24,000 workers terminated since President Donald Trump's inauguration, violate federal laws governing large-scale layoffs.

US District Judge James Bredar's ruling echoes a similar decision made by Judge William Alsup in San Francisco, who criticised the firings as a bypass of established regulations. Judge Alsup ordered the Department of Veterans Affairs, among others, to reoffer employment to those terminated around 13-14 February. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt condemned the rulings as unconstitutional overreach, stating that the administration would appeal. Alsup expressed his dismay over the government's justification for the mass firings, noting many employees had received positive performance evaluations before their dismissals. He underscored the importance of adhering to laws protecting workers. There are around 200,000 probationary staff across federal agencies, with about 15,000 in California. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

US seeks SC nod to curb birthright citizenship

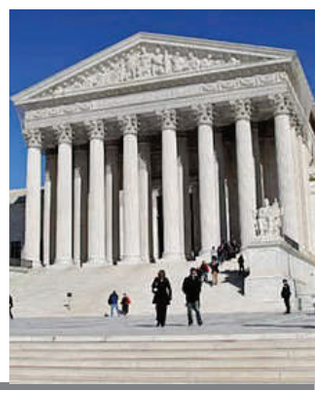
WASHINGTON, 14 MARCH

The Trump administration is asking the Supreme Court to allow restrictions on birthright citizenship to partly take effect while legal fights play out.

In emergency applications filed at the high court on Thursday, the administration asked the justices to narrow court orders entered by district judges in Maryland, Massachusetts and Washington that blocked the order President Donald Trump signed shortly after beginning his second term.

The order would deny citizenship to those born after February 19 whose parents are in the country illegally. It also forbids US agencies from issuing any document or accepting any state document recognising citizenship for such children.

Roughly two dozen states, as well as several individuals and groups, have sued over the executive order, which they say violates the Constitution's 14th Amendment promise of citizenship to anyone born inside the United States. *—PTI*



China, Russia seek end to Iran sanctions

TEHRAN, 14 MARCH

China, Russia and Iran have called for an end of all "illegal and unilateral sanctions" and urged for abandoning "threats of force" against Tehran, as per a joint statement, following talks between the three countries in Beijing on Friday.

The meeting between the three countries comes after Iran rejected the US proposal to restart nuclear negotiations.

In a joint statement released today, the three countries said diplomatic engagement and dialogue based on "mutual respect" were the "only effective and viable options" for addressing the issue of Iran's nuclear programme.

"The three countries emphasised the need to end all illegal unilateral sanctions. Relevant parties should address root causes, abandon sanctions, pressure tactics and threats of force," the statement released by Chinese state media Global Times read.

"The parties emphasized the importance of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2231 [in support of the Iran nuclear deal], including adherence to the outlined timeline, and called on the parties concerned to refrain from actions that could escalate the situation and instead create conditions conducive to diplomatic efforts," China's Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, said at a news conference.

A day before the trilateral meeting, Ma Zhaoxu met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Gharibabadi and said, as per the Global Times, that China is willing to work with Iran to implement the important consensus reached by the heads of state of the two countries.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the United States' claim that it is ready to negotiate with Iran is aimed at deceiving world public opinion. *—ANI*

Columbia expels students for building takeover

Columbia University has expelled or suspended some students who took over a campus building during pro-Palestinian protests last spring and temporarily evoked the diplomas of others who have since graduated. The university said that a judicial board brought a range of sanctions against students who occupied Hamilton Hall to protest the war in Gaza. Meanwhile, demonstrators from a Jewish group filled the lobby of Trump Tower to denounce the immigration arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a pro-Palestinian activist who helped lead protests against Israel.

US wine shops fear 200% tariff will kill demand

Wine sellers and importers said that President Donald Trump's 200 per cent tariff on European wine, champagne tariff of that size would essentially shut down the European wine business in the US. Jeff Zacharia, President of fine wine retailer Zachys said 80 per cent of the wine he sells is from Europe. Importers depend on European wines for a big part of their distribution system, he said. Marten Lodewijks, President of IWSR, a global data provider, said it would not be unprecedented but import duties of that size tend to be more targeted.

Trump's Greenland bid: PM urges tougher rejection

Greenland's outgoing Prime Minister Mute Egede has called for a stronger rejection by local politicians of United States President Donald Trump's promise to take over the strategically-located island, warning that "enough is enough". "This time we need to toughen our rejection of Trump. People cannot continue to disrespect us," Egede wrote on Facebook after Trump reiterated on Thursday his desire to annex the autonomous Danish territory. "The American president has once again evoked the idea of annexing us. I cannot accept that," he wrote.

UN REPORT

Iran steps up surveillance on women for headscarf violations

GENEVA, 14 MARCH

A recent United Nations report has revealed that Iran is increasingly utilising electronic surveillance and public informants to enforce its mandatory headscarf law, despite escalating calls for harsher penalties against those opposing it. This follows the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, which spurred nationwide protests against compulsory hijab regulations and ongoing defiance against the law.

According to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, women and girls continue to experience systematic discrimination regarding hijab enforcement, permeating all aspects of their lives. The report indicates that the Iranian state is relying heavily on state-sponsored vigilantism, enlisting businesses and private citizens to report non-compliance as a civic duty. Surveillance tactics have notably intensified, with Iranian authorities deploying aerial drones and facial recognition software at sites like Tehran's Amirkabir University to monitor women in public spaces. The report details the introduction of the "Nazer" mobile phone app, enabling users to report women not adhering to hijab laws directly to the police, triggering real-time alerts.

The aftermath of Mahsa Amini's death continues to loom over Iranian society, with unrest resulting in more than 500 fatalities and over 22,000 detentions. Enforcement of hijab laws has fluctuated, but the recently implemented Noor Plan has led to at least 618 arrests of women. Notably, Iran's executions surged to 938 in 2023, reflecting wider repression amidst an ongoing economic crisis due to US sanctions linked to its nuclear ambitions. *—PTI*

The aftermath of Mahsa Amini's death continues to loom over Iranian society, with unrest resulting in more than 500 fatalities **PHOTO: PTI**

Philippines' ex-prez to make first ICC appearance

MANILA, 14 MARCH

The Philippines' former President Rodrigo Duterte will make a first appearance at the International Criminal Court (ICC) to face charges of crimes against humanity in The Hague over his deadly war on drugs.

Duterte stands accused of the crime against humanity of murder over his years-long campaign against drug users and dealers that rights groups said killed as many as 30,000 people.

The 79-year-old former leader was turned over by the Philippines to The Hague-based court on Wednesday, becoming the first-ever Asian leader to be charged before the international tribunal.

During the hearing on Friday, Duterte will appear before judges and be informed of the crimes he is alleged to have committed, as well as his rights as a defendant.

As he landed in the Netherlands on Wednesday, the former leader appeared to accept responsibility for his actions, saying in a Facebook video: "I have been telling the police, the military, that it was my job and I am responsible."

Duterte's swift arrest in Manila and turnover to the ICC came amid a spectacular meltdown in relations between his family and the Marcos family, who had joined forces in the Philippines presidential elections in 2022 and won in a landslide. *—Agencies*

Rodrigo Duterte **PHOTO: X**

- The 79-year-old former leader was turned over by the Philippines to The Hague-based court on Wednesday, becoming the first-ever Asian leader to be charged before the international tribunal. He appeared to accept responsibility for his actions

Hackman estate moves to block death probe records

SANTA FE, 14 MARCH

A representative for the estate of actor Gene Hackman is seeking to block the public release of autopsy and investigative reports -- especially photographs and police body-camera video -- related to the recent deaths of Hackman and wife Betsy Arakawa at their New Mexico home last month.

It was announced last week that Hackman died at age 95 of heart disease. As much as a week after a rare, rodent-borne disease -- hantavirus pulmonary syndrome -- took the life of his 65-year-old wife.

Hackman's pacemaker last showed signs of activity on 18 February, indicating an abnormal heart rhythm on the day he likely died. The couple's partially-mummified bodies were not discovered until 26 February when maintenance and security workers showed up at their home and alerted police. The request described the couple's lifestyle in Santa Fe since Hackman's retirement. The couple "lived an exemplary private life for over thirty years in Santa Fe, New Mexico and did not showcase their lifestyle", said the petition. *—PTI*

BANK UNIONS CALL FOR STRIKE ON 24-25 MARCH

Issues include recruitment across cadres and a 5-day workweek

KOLKATA, 14 MARCH

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) on Thursday said its two-day nationwide strike on 24 and 25 March will be observed as scheduled since discussions with the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) over key demands failed to yield any positive outcome.

In a meeting with the IBA, all UFBU constituents raised issues, including recruitment in all cadres and a five-day workweek. Still, the key issues remained unresolved, National Confederation of Bank Employees (NCBE) General Secretary L Chandrasekhar said.

The UFBU, an umbrella body of nine bank employees' associations, earlier announced the strike to press for these demands which included filling up the workmen and officer director posts in public sector banks.

Members of Bank unions stage a protest to press for their various demands PHOTO: PTI

The unions have also sought the withdrawal of recent directives from the Department of Financial Services (DFS) regarding performance reviews and performance-linked incentives, alleging that such measures threaten job security and create employees.

The UFBU has further opposed what it calls "micro-management" of public sector banks by the DFS, arguing that such interventions undermine the autonomy of bank boards.

Other demands include resolving residual issues with the IBA and amending the Gratuity Act to raise the ceiling to Rs 25 lakh, aligning it with the scheme for government employees and seeking exemption from income tax.

The UFBU comprises major bank unions, including the All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), National Confederation of Bank Employees (NCBE), and All India Bank Officers' Association (AIBOA). —*PTI*

RS 2,100 CRORE IRREGULARITY

ICAI to audit IndusInd Bank for discrepancies

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is set to examine the financial statements of IndusInd Bank following the revelation of accounting discrepancies estimated at Rs 2,100 crore. The private sector lender disclosed these discrepancies related to its derivatives portfolio on 10 March, indicating an adverse impact of about 2.35 per cent on the bank's net worth as of December 2024, according to its internal review.

In light of this situation, the Financial Reporting Review Board (FRRB) of ICAI may undertake a proactive review of the bank's financial statements. "As a proactive measure, ICAI-FRRB may undertake a review of the financial statements of IndusInd Bank," stated ICAI President Charanjot Singh Nanda on Thursday.

The FRRB conducts assessments to ensure compliance with Accounting Standards, auditing standards, and the provisions outlined in the Companies Act, 2013, among other regulations. It also evaluates adherence to guidance on accounting and auditing issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). IndusInd Bank reported that the accounting lapse was identified around September-October last year and communicated a preliminary update to the RBI. A definitive figure will be released once the external agency appointed by the bank finalises its report, expected by early April. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Amravati airport gets DGCA nod; flights by month-end

MUMBAI, 13 MARCH

Amravati Airport has officially received its aerodrome licence from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced that Alliance Air will initiate flights from the airport to Mumbai by the end of the month. Located in Belora, the airport was developed by the Public Works Department in 1992 but had remained non-operational for public use until the Maharashtra Airport Development Company (MADC) renovated it, extending the runway and implementing necessary upgrades. This initiative is part of the state government's plan to enhance aviation infrastructure, which also includes airports in Chandrapur, Dhule, Shirdi, and Navi Mumbai. Fadnavis described the licence as a vital milestone for regional connectivity and economic development. The DGCA certificate was presented to the Chief Minister by MADC managing director Swati Pandey. —*PTI*

Hanto Workspaces revenue to rise over 40%

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Hanto Workspaces is expecting over 40 per cent increase in revenue this fiscal year to Rs 30 crore on rising demand for flexible managed office space. Bengaluru-based Hanto Workspaces had posted a revenue of Rs 21 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal year. At present, Verma said the company has 15 co-working facilities in Bengaluru covering 3 lakh square feet area and 6,000 seating capacity. The company charges between Rs 7,000 and Rs 18,000 per desk from corporate clients. Verma said the company is looking to strengthen its portfolio in Bengaluru and also exploring to enter other major cities. He said the company also intends to raise funds to expand business and future growth. In 2023, Hanto Workspaces had raised Rs 15 crore as seed funding to grow its business. Out of the total gross leasing, coworking operators took on rent 14 per cent of workspaces from property owners for further sub-renting to corporates, especially IT firms. Property consultant Anarock MD-Commercial Leasing and Advisory Peush Jain noted that flexible workspaces have truly come of age in 2024, with a significant increase in demand for flexible lease terms and managed office spaces, as companies seek agility and cost-efficiency. —*PTI*

Brigade targets ₹2,700 cr revenue from B'luru project

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Realty firm Brigade Enterprises targets Rs 2,700 crore revenue from its new housing project in Bengaluru. In a regulatory filing on Friday, Brigade Enterprises said it has launched a residential project 'Brigade Eternia' in Yelahanka, Bengaluru. The project, spread over 14.65 acres, will have 1,124 residential units with a total built-up area of about 20 lakh square feet. The project will be completed by 31 March, 2030. —*PTI*

Signature Global to invest ₹4,000 cr on 2 new projects

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Realty firm Signature Global is planning to invest around Rs 4,000 crore to develop two new housing projects in Gurugram as part of its expansion plan, its Chairman Pradeep Kumar Aggarwal said. In an interview with PTI, he said, in the next quarter, the company plans to launch more than 40 lakh square feet of area in two premium housing projects in Gurugram. "We will be focusing on the Rs 2-5 crore price bracket, where we are seeing huge demand but limited supply," Aggarwal said. He said it will be around Rs 4,000 crore, including land, construction and other costs. —*PTI*

Cosmetics stakeholders call for separate rules

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

The cosmetics industry stakeholders, during a round table in New Delhi, expressed a need to introduce an independent regulatory framework for the sector, separate from the framework for drugs.

Further, they suggested reforms in the product approval system and increased harmonisation between central and state authorities.

During the roundtable convened by 'The Dialogue', a public policy think tank on "Industry Outlook on Policy Frameworks for the Cosmetics Sector" the industry stakeholders commended the government's efforts over the years to ensure customer welfare, innovation, and affordability in the cosmetics industry.

They also highlighted the need to reassess the current legal framework, with a focus on the challenges posed by regulating drugs and cosmetics under a common law, a release added. Going further, the industry stakeholders also discussed the need for reforms in the product approval procedure for cosmetics, with a focus on the impact of pre-market approval processes on innovation. —*PTI*

AFTER PURCHASE OF 1.59M SHARES

HDFC mutual fund stake in IndusInd Bank exceeds 5%

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

HDFC Mutual Fund has increased its stake in IndusInd Bank to over 5 per cent following the purchase of an additional 1.59 million shares. This move comes just one day after IndusInd Bank revealed a significant Rs 2,100 crore discrepancy in its accounting records, amounting to around 2.35 per cent of the bank's net worth, resulting in a sharp decline in its share price.

As of 11 March 2025, HDFC Mutual Fund's total holdings in IndusInd Bank have risen to 5.02 per cent of its paid-up equity capital, up from the previous 4.82 per cent following the latest acquisition. The mutual fund now holds approximately 779 million shares in the bank.

PHOTO: X

The regulatory filing did not specify the purchase price of the shares. IndusInd Bank's shares closed at Rs 672.10 after a drop of 1.84 per cent on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

The bank disclosed that the accounting issues were identified around September-October 2024, with preliminary reports given to the Reserve Bank of India last week.

A final report from an appointed external agency is expected by early April, shedding more light on the previously overlooked discrepancies in the bank's treasury operations —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

IDEAFORGE PLANS HIGHER R&D SPEND THIS FISCAL

MUMBAI, 14 MARCH

City-based drone maker ideaForge is planning higher R&D spend this fiscal year, as it develops technology and product platforms in the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) space.

With the government committed to fostering domestic drone research, development, and manufacturing, continuous innovation through product and market research is essential for sustained growth in the UAV sector, the company said.

"The R&D (research and development) spend last year was 22 per cent of our revenues. This year, depending on the revenue, the base may shift, but it will be on the higher side as compared to FY24," Ankit Mehta, co-founder and chief executive officer at ideaForge Technologies Ltd said.

The company's consolidated revenue from operations in fiscal year ended March 31, 2024 stood at Rs 314-crore, while the Profit After Tax was at Rs 45.27 crore.

For the latest December quarter, it reported a consolidated loss of Rs 24.02 crore. It had posted a PAT of Rs 14.7 crore in Q3FY24, while the consolidated revenues for the same period dropped to Rs 17.6 crore, from Rs 90.9 crore. ideaForge announced strategic investment and a partnership with (California)-based nano and micro-UAV provider Vantage Robotics Inc to further strengthen its global reach and R&D capabilities. —*PTI*

Guided by India first: Goyal on meeting US trade representative

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said that he had a "forward looking" discussion with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement.

"Our approach will be guided by 'India First', 'Viksit Bharat' and our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," the Commerce Minister wrote on his X timeline, sharing a photograph of the meeting.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was in the US last week. His visit to the US followed US President Donald Trump and PM Modi's plans to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by the fall of 2025.

The two leaders had committed to designating senior representatives to advance these negotiations.

During the recent meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the two leaders resolved to expand trade and investment to make their citizens more prosperous, nations stronger, economies more innovative, and supply chains more resilient.

They resolved to deepen the US-India trade relationship to promote growth that ensures fairness, national security and job creation. To this end, the leaders set a bold new goal for bilateral trade - "Mission 500" - aiming to more than double total bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.

Since assuming office for his second term, President Trump has reiterated his stance on tariff reciprocity, emphasising that the United States will match tariffs imposed by other countries, including India, to ensure fair trade. The US has on various occasions said India has some of the highest tariffs in the world and that this will require a rethink. —*ANI*

US Trade Representative Jamieson with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal PHOTO: PTI

Low volatility suggests panic: Nuvama on India stocks

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Despite low volatility in the domestic stock markets over the past few months, investors are expected to tread cautiously going ahead, in the backdrop of the recent meltdown in the Indian equity market, according to the latest Nuvama report.

"Nifty has declined by 15 per cent over the past five months, marking the longest correction streak since September and the worst post-COVID. Despite this, low volatility suggests that peak panic may still be ahead," the report said.

The report by Nuvama highlighted that India's valuation premium to other emerging markets has dropped significantly to 50 per cent, down from 70 per cent, bringing it back in line with historical averages.

Additionally, the report said that global risks have intensified due to slowing US growth, with Q1 2025 GDP now cast at 0.5 per cent, down from 3.8 per cent.

It said that there are concerns that the Make America Great Again (MAGA) tariffs and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) spending cuts could fuel inflation or even trigger a recession in the United States.

PHOTO: X

A weakening job market further adds to risk-off sentiment, potentially leading to emerging market currency weakness, including the Rupee, as per the Nuvama report.

The report further added that market bottoming remains uncertain as earnings revival appears distant due to weak demand and fading margin tailwinds.

Policy easing is also limited, with bond yields still elevated, restricting monetary flexibility, the report added in its analysis of the condition of the market.

A bottoming indicates that the market has reached its low point and could be in the early stages of an upward trend. —*ANI*

FOLLOWING OFFICIAL MEET

Govt assures exporters amid US tariff threat

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

The Indian commerce ministry has assured domestic exporters, particularly from labour-intensive sectors like leather and textiles, that their interests will be safeguarded in light of impending US tariff threats. During a virtual meeting with Export Promotion Councils (EPCs), Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal encouraged stakeholders to share their strengths and concerns with the government, fostering better engagement with the US.

Goyal expressed optimism about the willingness of industry stakeholders to convert global challenges into opportunities. He highlighted the importance of exploring new markets and enhancing competitiveness as part of India's export growth strategy. The meeting addressed concerns from sectors like steel regarding the potential repercussions of US tariff impositions, which have already affected steel and aluminium exports.

PHOTO: X

One industry representative mentioned that the ministry is diligently working towards a proposed bilateral trade agreement with the US, while assuring stakeholders that India's export interests will remain protected. The representative also noted that the current global trade environment necessitates a shift from protectionism to a more reciprocal approach. The discussion comes after Goyal's recent trade talks with US counterparts in Washington, where the US proposed reciprocal tariffs effective from 2 April.

India's exports suffered a decline for the third consecutive month in January, dropping 2.38 per cent year-on-year to USD 36.43 billion, coinciding with an increased trade deficit of USD 22.99 billion.

Ajay Sahai, Director General of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations acknowledged that while orders from the US are promising, uncertainty regarding tariffs is hampering actual dispatches. Some sectors like apparel have suggested a "zero for zero" tariff arrangement with the US to boost exports.

It focused on strategies to increase exports, including proposals for importing petroleum products not produced in India and expediting environmental clearance processes. Goyal reiterated the government's commitment to advancing bilateral trade agreements, indicating that substantive progress is being made. —*PTI*

China boosts lending to increase consumer spending

BANGKOK, 14 MARCH

In a bid to boost consumer spending, China's financial regulator has instructed banks and financial institutions to promote consumer financing and increase credit card usage. This directive, issued on Friday, reflects the ruling Communist Party's latest strategy to instil confidence in consumers who are currently favouring savings due to job uncertainties and economic outlook.

The National Financial Regulatory Commission called for increased lending and support for borrowers facing difficulties, leading to a rise in Chinese share prices following the announcement. A briefing is scheduled for Monday to discuss measures aimed at enhancing spending and investment, which are deemed essential for sustaining economic momentum after the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: X

China's economy is reportedly growing at around 5 per cent. However, concerns regarding employment and the costs of healthcare and education have resulted in cautious consumer behaviour, hindering business activity.

The property market's prolonged downturn, linked to government efforts to curb borrowing by developers, has also negatively impacted consumer sentiment. While last year's export surge provided some respite from stagnant domestic demand, rising tariffs imposed by the US on Chinese goods could threaten future export growth. —*ANI*

PHOTO: X

Lahiri tied 25th as Johnson leads in Liv Singapore

SINGAPORE, 14 MARCH

India's Anirban Lahiri was placed tied 25th after shooting 1-under 70 as American Dustin Johnson roared back to form with a bogey-free 63 to lead LIV Golf Singapore by three shots at the Sentosa Golf Club on Friday. Johnson's 8-under round equals his best single-round LIV Golf performance. The Indian trio of rookies Avani Prashanth, Pranavi Urs, and Diksha Dagar endured a tough day in the opening round of the 2025 Australian Women's Classic in Coffs Harbour on Friday. Prashanth, with 2-over 72, was the best placed at tied 55th, while Pranavi (73) and Diksha (74) were further behind in tied 79th and tied 88th. *—PTI*

Samson reflects on Dravid's influence on his captaincy

JAIPUR, 14 MARCH

Sanju Samson, who will lead the Rajasthan Royals for a fifth successive year, credits Rahul Dravid's leadership with having a major influence on his approach. Dravid's return to Rajasthan Royals as head coach in 2025, after a successful tenure with the Indian team that culminated in their T20 World Cup triumph, marked a full-circle moment for Samson. Dravid's association with the Royals spans back to 2012-13, when he captained the side, a period during which the Indian great picked Samson during a trial.Dravid later became the team director and mentor in 2014-15. Samson said. "It's quite funny how things work out. In my first season*—PTI*

Camilo and Lucas share Players C'ship lead on wild day

PONTE VEDRA BEACH , 14 MARCH

Camilo Villegas was on the phone the day before The Players Championship trying to sort out his swing with a coach who is in Singapore caddying at a LIV Golf event. He wound up tied for the lead, a peculiar twist in a tournament filled with them. Thursday was no exception. Lucas Glover had nine birdies in his round of 6-under 66, leaving him tied with Villegas and J.J. Spaun, who managed to get around the TPC Sawgrass without a bogey. Max McGreevy, who tied the tournament record for the highest score two years ago with an 89, had a chance to join them. He was at 5 under and faced a 15-foot birdie putt on the 17th hole when play was suspended by darkness. *—PTI*

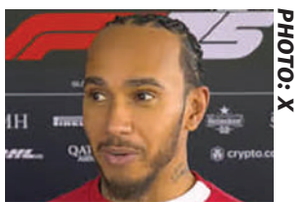


PHOTO: X

Lewis Hamilton ready to race for Ferrari

MELBOURNE, 14 MARCH

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton raced a Ferrari for the first time. Reigning world champion Max Verstappen arrived without a lot of mileage in his Red Bull. Lando Norris is helping McLaren set a benchmark with his pace in testing. Formula 1 is expecting a hyper-competitive milestone 75th-anniversary season in 2025, and it starts this weekend with the Australian Grand Prix. There's no shortage of unknowns in terms of the pecking order and the weather. Most of the headlines ahead of Sunday's Australian Grand Prix have revolved around Hamilton's move to Ferrari from Mercedes.*—PTI*

Lakshya bows out of All England Badminton QFs

India's campaign ends after Treesa-Gayatri pair's loss

BIRMINGHAM, 14 MARCH

India's Lakshya Sen and Treesa-Gayatri

PHOTO: PTI

India's Lakshya Sen bowed out of the All England Badminton Championships and so did the women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand after losing their respective quarterfinal matches here on Friday.

Women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also bowed out of the tournament in the quarterfinals to end the Indian challenge at this year's All England Open.

The 2022 finalist, who had narrowly lost a Paris Olympic medal last year, was outplayed 10-21, 16-21 in a 45-minute contest.Sen, ranked world No. 15, had won his last two matches against Li, including at the Thomas Cup.

Feng stamped his authority early, winning the first game in just 17 minutes.

A powerful smash gave him a 9-4 lead, and he entered the break with a solid 11-4 advantage.Sen's unsuccessful review left him trailing 4-12, but he briefly upped his attack, reducing the gap to 7-12 with a sharp cross-court smash.

However, the tall Feng upped his aggression, moving ahead 17-15 with a powerful smash. At 15-18, Sen suffered some finger bruises, spilling blood on the court and requiring medical attention, and the court had to be cleaned.The brief stoppage, however, did little to halt Feng's momentum, as he powered through with another thundering smash to close out the match. Despite the loss, it was a solid campaign for Sen, who had earlier stunned defending champion Jonatan Christie in straight games, avenging his semifinal defeat to the Indonesian last year.

On Thursday, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty pulled out in men's doubles after an injury, Malvika Bansod exited in women's singles, and the mixed doubles pair of Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde also fell short.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand started well but couldn't sustain it against China's world No 2 Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning.

With big names like PV Sindhu, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, and Chirag Shetty already ousted, India's medal hopes rested on these three players – Sen in the men's singles category and Treesa-Gayatri in the women's doubles. But against their powerhouse Chinese opponents, they couldn't find the answers.

Lakshya defeated Jonatan Christie of Indonesia on Thursday.

The Indian, who now has a 3-4 head to head record with Christie, defeated the Indonesian defending champion 21-13 21-10 in 36 mins in what turned out to be a pretty lopsided contest.

Treesa and Gayatri, meanwhile, had defeated Korea's Hye Jeong Kim and Hee Yong Kong 15-21, 21-18, 21-18 in the pre-quarters to advance to this stage of the round. *—PTI*

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

PHOTO: PTI

MI favourites to bag second title, DC aim to break title jinx

MUMBAI, 14 MARCH

MI vs DC
Match starts at
7.30 pm IST

Powered by the all-around brilliance of Nat Sciver-Brunt and Hayley Matthews, Mumbai Indians head into the Women's Premier League final as favorites to claim their second title, while Delhi Capitals hope to break their title jinx in what promises to be a thrilling showdown here on Saturday.

Sciver-Brunt (493 runs, 9 wickets) and Matthews (17 wickets, 304 runs) currently top the batting and bowling charts, respectively, making them crucial to MI's title charge against Meg Lanning's formidable Delhi outfit.

Lanning, who has retired from the International level, is one of the greatest captains in women's cricket and would be determined to add a WPL trophy to her decorated career and end DC's trophy drought both in the women's and men's IPL since 2008.

While DC secured a direct entry into the final due to a superior net run rate, MI's firepower with the bat gives them an edge on a batting belter that the Brabourne Stadium provides.

For DC, their chances would depend more on a very potent bowling attack with Southern Stars spinner Jess Jonassen and seasoned India seamer Shikha Pandey, both of whom had 11 wickets each in the league stages at a decent economy rate.That was also a game where MI's performer of the season, Sciver-Brunt, had endured a rare failure. *—PTI*

Axar Patel named DC Captain

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

India all-rounder Axar Patel was on Friday appointed captain of Delhi Capitals for the upcoming IPL on expected lines pipping another senior player KL Rahul, who has joined the team this season.

Currently the team's longest-serving player, having played six seasons for Delhi since 2019, the 31-year-old was DC's top retention for INR 16.50 crore ahead of the mega-auction last November. In 82 games for Delhi, he has scored 967 runs and picked up 62 wickets at a fantastic economy rate of shade over 7.

While his IPL captaincy experience is limited, he led Gujarat in domestic cricket, including the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the Vijay Hazare Trophy in 2024-25.

He also served as India's T20I vice-captain earlier this year, and in their recent triumph in the Champions Trophy, Axar played a key role, taking five wickets at an economy of 4.35. He also played a key role at No. 5 and scored 109 runs at 27.25.

"It is my absolute honour to captain the Delhi Capitals, and I'm deeply grateful to our owners and support staff for placing their faith in me," stated Axar in a media release.

Axar will replace Rishabh Pant at the helm, with the flamboyant keeper-batter exiting the franchise before the mega auction, and will now lead the Lucknow Super Giants. *—PTI*

IPL 2025

Bumrah likely to miss initial rounds

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Jasprit Bumrah is likely to miss the initial rounds of the IPL 2025 matches for Mumbai Indians as the star pacer is still recovering from the lower back injury that rendered him out of action since January.

Bumrah suffered the injury during the second day of the fifth Test against Australia at Sydney and did not bowl in Australia's second innings, where they chased 162 successfully to emerge a six-wicket winner.

Bumrah, who had taken 32 wickets from five matches in that series, has been sidelined ever since and has also missed India's victorious Champions Trophy campaign.

He was named in India's provisional squad for the ICC showpiece but could not attain the optimum fitness level in time, as mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy was drafted into the side. "His recuperation is going well. But at this stage, it is better to give him some more time to return to peak fitness, considering India's Test series against England in June," a source close to the development told PTI. The IPL 2025 is scheduled to end on 25 May. *—PTI*

> **India can now field three national teams of the same quality due to IPL 2025**
>
> -Dinesh Karthik, Former India wicketkeeper-batter

Indian Wells: Alcaraz fights past Cerundolo to enter SFs

INDIAN WELLS, 14 MARCH

Two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz fought off determined challenger Francisco Cerundolo 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) on Thursday to reach the semifinals of the Indian Wells ATP Masters.

On another cold, blustery night in the California desert, Alcaraz battled back from 1-4 down in the second set, coming up with a break and two love service holds to force the tiebreaker as he kept his bid to join Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the only men to win three straight Indian Wells titles on track.

Carlos Alcaraz

Alcaraz had to save breakpoints in each of his first three service games. But after an emphatic hold for 4-3, he gained the first break of the contest with a deft volley, and just like that, he was serving for the first set.

After sliding to pop a drop volley winner over the net for set point, Alcaraz drilled a deep forehand that Cerundolo could barely get a racquet on.

But it was Cerundolo who broke first in the second, finally converting his ninth break point of the match then holding for 4-1.

But he couldn't hold off the world number three, who raced to a 5-2 lead in the tiebreaker on the way to victory. *—PTI*

Sarah Walsh optimistic about Indian women's football team's future

BENGALURU, 14 MARCH

Sarah Walsh, a former Australia player and the current head of women's football in her country, believes India is on the path to becoming a women's football powerhouse within the next 10 years.

Walsh was in conversation with Isa Guha and former women's footballer and FIFA Council Member Moya Todd at the RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit at the Padukone Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence on Friday.

Walsh, who represented Australia at the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, stressed how she saw tremendous potential for the Indian women's football team's growth on the global stage."

I am a little nervous about India in the future of football.

I think they're going to be a powerhouse in 10 years.

If you look at world sport through the men's sporting lens, the gap might be a lot bigger when you talk about football, but it is not in cricket."In the women's landscape, there are fewer years to correct.

In football, the Indian women's team is ranked 13th in Asia and 67th in the world.

Sarah Walsh

India are ranked 67 among the 211 countries that play football," Walsh said.She said that the sport would receive a massive fillip if India were to win the bid to host the 2036 Olympics."It's not all about investment.

If India is to get the Olympics, then that's a pathway. The infrastructure is there, the participation numbers will be there. Where that investment goes means India can very soon close that gap in football," she added.

India hosted the AFC Women's Asian Cup in 2022, and Australia is all set to host the next edition in 2026.Walsh, who won the 2010 edition of the tournament as a player, said she looked forward to India making a significant impact on the big stage." For the Women's Asian Cup that we're hosting in Australia next year, I can tell you that India is on top of my list as a priority in terms of a success factor for the tournament. *—PTI*

Para-athletes from 20 countries celebrate Holi

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

Para athletes from 20 countries, who participated in the World Para Athletics Grand Prix, on Friday celebrated the festival of colours Holi after the closing ceremony of the competition at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here.

Leading accessibility organisation Svayam, the official accessibility partner for the New Delhi 2025 World Para Athletics Grand Prix, organised the celebration along with the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI). Reinforcing its commitment to making sporting venues more inclusive, Svayam conducted a detailed accessibility review of the venue and provided customized transport solutions, facilitating smooth mobility for all participants during the Grand Prix. Commencing on 8 March, the competition hosted over 350 para-athletes from 20-plus countries, providing them with a global platform to display their skill and determination. *—PTI*

EUROPA LEAGUE

Man United and Tottenham reach QFs

MANCHESTER, 14 MARCH

Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes scored a hat trick in a 4-1 win over 10-man Real Sociedad, and Tottenham overcame AZ Alkmaar 3-1 as both Premier League clubs advanced to the Europa League quarterfinals Thursday.

The second-tier tournament offers both teams a chance for a trophy amid lackluster domestic campaigns and a welcome bonus of a spot in the Champions League next season.

Fernandes converted two penalties before completing a hat trick in the 87th minute to set up a last-eight matchup with Lyon. United advanced on a 5-2 aggregate score.

Bruno Fernandes scored a hat trick in a 4-1 win over 10-man Real Sociedad

PHOTO: X

United trailed after 10 minutes when Mikel Oyarzabal scored from the penalty spot at Old Trafford. The visitors went down a man when Jon Aramburu received a straight red in the 63rd minute.

In London, Wilson Odobert scored twice for Tottenham, which will face Eintracht Frankfurt in the quarterfinals. Spurs advanced 3-2 on aggregate. After a 1-0 loss away last week, the Spurs got a 26th-minute goal from Odobert after high pressing forced a turnover. James Maddison doubled the lead on the night shortly after the break, which gave Spurs a one-goal advantage overall. But the Dutch team wasn't done, and Peer Koopmeiners pounced on a defensive mistake just two minutes after center-back Micky van de Ven was subbed off and scored in the 63rd. *—PTI*

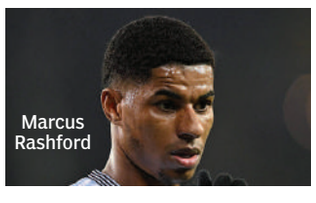
FIFA WC Qualifiers: Marcus, Jordan earn England recall

NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH

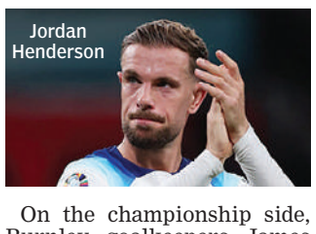
Aston Villa's Marcus Rashford and Ajax's Jordan Henderson earned recalls as Thomas Tuchel named his first squad since taking over as head coach for the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers to be played later this month.

England will take on Albania and Latvia at home in its opening two 2026 World Cup Qualifiers Group K encounters

Arsenal youngster Miles Lewis-Skelly and Newcastle United center-back Dan Burn received their maiden call-ups to the national team, which also features Chelsea captain Reece James, who made a handful of appearances after a long injury layoff.



Marcus Rashford



Jordan Henderson

On the championship side, Burnley goalkeepers James Trafford and Aaron Ramsdale join Jordan Pickford and Dean Henderson as the goalkeeping options in the squad. *—PTI*